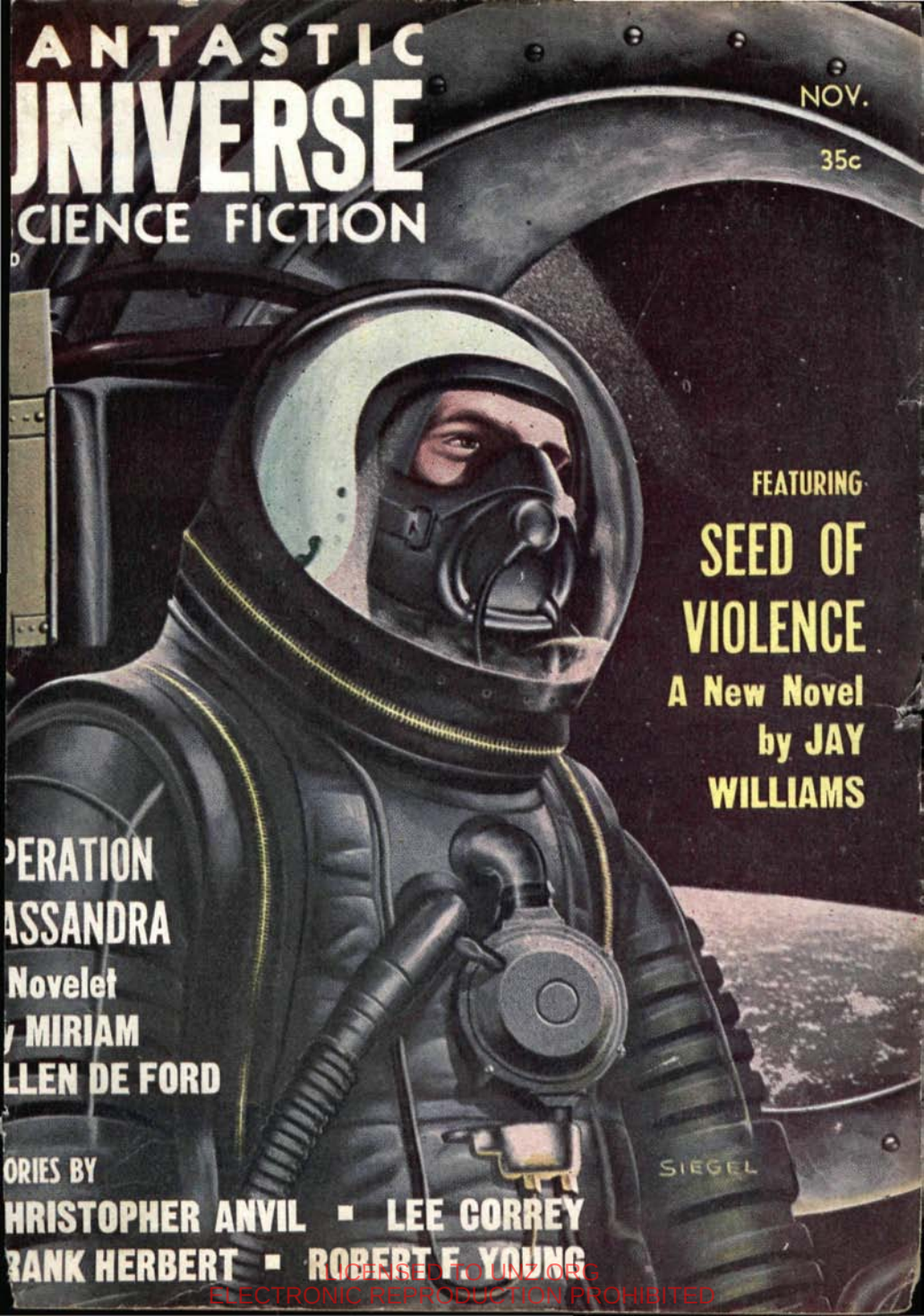

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SURVIVAL IN SPACE

WE HAVE LEARNED, in our lifetime, to fly — first a few miles — then further—then further—and then for distances and at speeds that would have been dismissed as impossible less than twenty years ago! If we are today able to do this, there is no question that tomorrow—led by young men such as the one on this cover, pictured at the "window" of a space platform—we *will* advance still further in this country's flight to the stars!

A major problem, however, as Lester del Rey pointed out in a recent article in this magazine, is that of re-entry.

What does this mean? Simply that the young man sent up into space must be brought back *alive* to where he started from!

Recent developments in aviation engineering and technology, under the pressure of a variety of factors, have made it urgent that all efforts in aviation medicine be directed towards the defining—and towards the solving—of the new and exotic problems of this space age!

In other words, space medicine is a direct extrapolation of aviation medicine, under the impact of this need for safety for tomorrow's spacemen.

The habitability of space vehicles, while still viewed in terms of the limitations rather than the requirements, and still actually not compatible with advanced human engineering and man-machine concepts, is no longer exclusively the concern of the science fiction writer! Today this is a problem for Wernher von Braun and his associates and the others who, here and abroad, are responsible for the advances described in Del Rey's articles in this magazine, another of which will appear next month. Specific problems in the habitability and operation of a space ship include meteorites, pressure, temperature, radiation, acceleration, weightlessness, atmospheric control, personnel selection, long-term isolation, diet, distribution of space, the overall man-machine maintenance and operation, etc., etc.

Keep in mind that it will take 920 days to get to Mars—920 days during which you are confined to a ship hurtling through space.

Normal submarine patrols did not exceed sixty days during World War II. During this time it was found necessary to surface periodically *to renew the air in the submarine*. The longest continued submergence, and this was under immobile test and not operational conditions, was for thirty days! In other words, up to now, the longest operation from which conclusions can be drawn is still *one-thirtieth* of the time it'll take to get to Mars!

To sum up—the crew must be carefully selected, highly trained, well motivated, *and* provided with an environment in which deviations from the normal are held down to a minimum.

The need isn't so much to adapt man to a stressful environment—the need is to tailor that environment to *man's* requirement!

This can and will spell survival in space for young men like the one on this cover! This *can* hasten our reaching the stars!

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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (A Rosicrucian)

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operation cassandra

by . . . Miriam Allen de Ford

Was anyone alive outside? Three men and one woman had survived in the Centre —the others were all dead.

SOMEBODY *had discovered that hibernating animals contracting radiation sickness showed no symptoms of it until after hibernation was over. So the top-secret Operation Cassandra came into being . . .*

I woke up slowly, as if from an ordinary sleep. For a moment I couldn't orient myself, then I remembered everything. We had been carefully briefed—how long ago was that? We were to be kept alive automatically, though the staff would be on constant watch—so much Somnotone injected to keep us asleep, so much (or so little, for hardly any was needed) of intravenous feeding and elimination of waste, our temperature kept at 85° F. The idea was that when or if the catastrophe came, and when it was safe afterwards, they would discontinue hibernation, and then we would wake of our own accord. Then, they told us, we would be given at once the anti-radiation serum that would surely be isolated and ready by that time.

What they hadn't told us — hadn't dared to imagine, themselves,

---

Miriam Allen de Ford, writing on SF recently, in The Humanist, *said: "The bug-eyed monster from outer space has had his day. The scantily clad blonde whom he used to snatch has had hers. So have the arrogant supermen produced by atomic radiation, the time traveler who kills his grandfather and so ceases to exist, the boy wonders . . ." and others.*

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was what really happened—that most of the staff would be killed; that the few left would be too near death to do anything about awakening us; that no serum would have been discovered; and that we would lie there in the Hibernatorium until the automatic machines ran out of supplies and gave up. Neither had they told us that most of us would die when the nourishment and nursing gradually ceased before the Somnotone gave out.

I got the picture little by little. First when at last I sat up shakily, shivering and hungry, and found no one near except the other silent forms ranged row by row in the big room, men on one side, women on the other. Then when I called and no one came. Then when I stumbled from bed to bed and, terrified and horror-stricken, gazed on rows of skeletons, a few corpses long gone in decomposition, a few more still lying as if asleep, but dead. And three who began to stir, as I had stirred a few moments before.

There were two men and a woman left alive besides me. They were just beginning to sit up, as I had done. I knew them all.

Ole Arnesen had been born in Denmark and brought to America as a child of three. His father was a dairyman in California, and Ole had gone to the Agricultural College of the State University. But both his parents and his only sister had been killed in the great earthquake of 1976, and he had sold the farm and drifted east. He was a few years older than I, and had served two years in the Air Corps. Arnesen was somebody you could depend on. I was glad that if so few of us had to survive, he was one of them.

About Jim Forbes I knew less and was more doubtful—and embarrassed by my doubt. Just as they say radiation sickness carries on in the genes for generations to come, I suppose any Southerner born carries somewhere in the remote recesses of his subconscious mind the prejudices of his ancestors. It had been a quarter of a century since the last vestiges of racial discrimination had been wiped out in America, and yet I still couldn't feel comfortable with a negro. Yet probably Forbes was the only one of us who had joined the project out of pure patriotism, with no personal reasons. (Like me, he had been too young for the draft after they started it at 25). He was a New Yorker, a Harvard graduate who had majored in philosophy, and the author of two published book-tapes of poetry. He had enlisted in Operation Cassandra as he might have enlisted in the Defense Forces in time of war.

The woman was Amy Sackett. I remembered her from the briefing weeks—small, finely made, with flyaway light brown hair and big, intent blue eyes. She hailed from a small town in the Middle West, which before this she had left only for the four years she attended one of the big colleges for women in the East.

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As for me, Roger Campbell, all I need say is that I come from Virginia, that I'm tall and big-boned, that I've been an orphan from birth—all of us had to be without parents or siblings, unmarried and unattached, besides being between 21 and 30, physically and mentally sound, and American citizens able to pass security tests—and that I've been on my own since I was 16. I've worked as a seaman, a longshoreman, a farm laborer, a construction worker. I've had darned little formal education, but I've read a lot in public libraries all over the country.

We came to Washington in answer to newspaper ads for "an important government research project." "Maximum pay and bonuses. Permanent," the ads said. Permanent was right.

I can imagine some of the screwballs that answered—I saw some of them before they were screened. There were ex-convicts trying to go straight under difficulties, youngsters turned down by the armed forces (very few of those got by the physical and psychological tests), kids who had flunked out in college, budding scientists attracted by the word "research," people fired from their jobs or just fed up with them. And, I suspect, an awful lot of recent widows and divorcees, and people of both sexes who had been jilted or were suffering from the pangs of unrequited love and wanted a change of scene.

Also, since the year was 1984, we got some of the disillusioned ex-Orwell Cultists.

Ever since Orwell wrote that book, way back in 1949, 1984 had come to stand for calamity and terror. Around in the early '70s a cult actually arose, something like the Millerites of the 19th Century, only political instead of religious, which devoutly believed that Eric Blair (which was Orwell's real name) had been, not a novelist, but a prophet—and that his prophecy referred to America instead of, or as well as, England. They didn't propose to fight against his prophesied totalitarian victory; that, they thought, would be futile, since the point of true prophecy is that it cannot be resisted or evaded. Instead, the cult members were pledged to commit suicide on December 31, 1983. A lot of them did—and a lot of them killed their immediate families as well. The courts and mental hospitals were full of the poor fanatics who tried it and failed. Nothing of particular moment happened in 1984, after all. (And I might add, for the benefit of those who, not really knowing anything about it, had some muddled inkling of the existence of our super-hush-hush project, that it was pure accident that it was 1984 when Operation Cassandra started functioning: it had nothing whatever to do with Orwell's book).

Once we four survivors realized what we had awakened to, we could no longer bear to stay in the charnel-house which the Hibernatorium had

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become. By one impulse we left the big room behind us.

But we did not dare yet to leave the building. It had been elaborately equipped against radioactive contagion; some said there were inner walls of solid lead, but that may have been a myth. Outside, the very air might be lethal, for all we knew. We weren't scientists; we were only guinea-pigs, and all we knew about radioactivity was what they'd allowed us to read.

We found the door open to the Administration Office, on the first floor, with nothing worse in it than thick dust everywhere. (Have I mentioned the dust?) We had to talk, to realize, to plan—if there was anything we *could* plan. We didn't even know where we were, except that it was somewhere in the Southwest; we'd been flown here blindfolded.

"First of all," Arnesen said, "we've got to find something to eat, whether it's safe or not. I'd rather take my chances of poisoning than die of starvation."

"It's safe enough, I imagine," I told him. "The food supplies were canned and packed with every contingency in view. Let's adjourn to the kitchen wing, see what we can find right away, and then inventory the supplies."

Forbes was standing at the sealed window, looking out. I'd been keeping my eyes away from there. Forbes had talked very little. Now he said:

"Even the out-buildings seem to be intact, so if it was a nuclear blast, it couldn't have been very near here. But the trees are dead, and there's not a blade of grass in their Garden in the Desert they worked so hard over. What I've been watching for is some kind of animal—anything, even a rat or a snake—that would show us we could live out there."

"Nothing?" asked Amy Sackett.

"Nothing."

"Let's eat first, as Arnesen said," I urged. "Then we can begin to draw up a program. I'm parched as well as starving, and I wouldn't dare drink tap-water even if any is running. There ought to be some fruit juices in the kitchen."

"Best thing for us anyway," Ole agreed. "My father used to go on a fast once in a while—he was a good deal of a food faddist. And he always told us a fast must be broken on liquids, or it might be fatal. We don't know how long we've been without food. I know by looking at you three that you're down to skin and bones, and I guess I am too."

He was. We didn't need any mirrors to show us—the synthetic Everclean pajamas we'd been put to sleep in were hanging on us all like tents.

We adjourned for breakfast. In the big shelter-safe built against the kitchen we found cans of orange juice, and after we'd tested them with a Geiger counter—each of us wore a portable, naturally—we drank them and felt better. Amy scouted around and took a rough inventory. When we had the

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strength for solid food, there was going to be enough to last the four of us indefinitely—there had been supplies for 200 plus the staff. But the electricity was off, and how we were going to cook, none of us could think. It didn't matter; there was plenty we could eat cold until we figured that one out.

Without saying anything, we all avoided the Hibernatorium. But we men got into the outfitting room on the men's side, and Amy on the women's, and we managed to rig ourselves out with clothes to fit our new waistlines; the things we'd worn when we arrived were much too large for us at present. Then we trooped down again to the Administration Office to talk things over.

I know there were two things uppermost in my own mind, and I suppose in everybody's. First, of course, just what was the situation outside? Was the air breathable? Was there any non-poisonous means of subsistence? Above all, were we the only living human beings around? Perhaps this had been the worst-hit of all sections of the country, perhaps the least; we had no way of finding out. We didn't kid ourselves about there being any more tridimens or news-tapes, but there might be planes or surface cars still usable, if we could find fuel to run them. A subsidiary worry that might determine a lot of other things was the date, but how we'd ever discover that I couldn't imagine.

And the other thing we had to think about was the bare fact that we might very well find out that we were the last survivors in the whole country, perhaps in the whole world; that it might be up to us to re-form civilization, and to repopulate the world, or our portion of it.

And that we were three men and a woman.

We kept getting off the track in making plans and guesses, until finally we had to face it. On the surface we were all very calm and matter-of-fact. But I know how I was feeling underneath, and I guess the others felt the same way.

It was Amy herself who brought it to a head.

"Look," she said, "we might as well settle this. Either we're going to stay right here and keep going as best we can, until somebody rescues us or we die, or we're going to make ourselves the nucleus of a new community—maybe the only one in existence, unless there are other little pockets of survivors somewhere else who have escaped radiation sickness or got over it. We're all mature, intelligent human beings—we were carefully selected, and we might as well acknowledge that we're a kind of elite. So how about discussing that phase of it, before we go on to other things? What we do will depend a lot on the solution of that problem, anyway."

None of us was looking at the others, I noticed; everybody was staring at the floor or out of the windows.

Ole cleared his throat.

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"Well," he said, "one thing is obvious, Amy. Let's be objective about this. If there's going to be a new population, it's going to have an ancestress, and as things are at present you're the only one qualified."

I found myself saying foolishly: "That's not a very polite way to approach the subject!"

"This isn't the time or place for compliments, Rog," Amy said. "I'm not picturing myself as a *femme fatale*—I'm just, as Ole says, the only *femme* of any variety in sight."

Ole, gazing over our heads, spoke in his slow Scandinavian way.

"If Amy prefers any one of us, that's that. The other two, I think, in that case ought to clear out as soon as possible. Or if she has no preference, we could have some kind of lottery. We're all fit and we're all willing—"

"Not me," Jim Forbes cut in. "Count me out. This is a white man's country and you're the majority left in it, around here, anyhow. I agree with Ole—let the loser join me in trying to find a way out of here, and perhaps locate some more survivors. I'd rather have a woman of my own kind, just as you would."

I didn't say anything, though I had the grace to feel ashamed. Ole shook his head and started to speak. Amy interrupted him.

"Wait," she said. "There's another consideration."

We waited. She flushed, gulped, and went on, her voice carefully controlled.

"We're in an unprecedented situation. We don't know what shape the country's in, or the world, or ourselves, for that matter. Has it occurred to you that some or all of us may be sterile right now? We don't know for how many years we've been subjected to radiation from fall-out, right up there in the Hibernatorium, no matter how tight the building is. We've agreed that no nuclear bombs could have fallen very near here. But that still leaves fall-out—to say nothing of germs."

"What are you driving at, Amy?" Ole asked. "If we're all sterile anyway, that's the end."

"You know perfectly well what I'm driving at. Maybe we all are, maybe none, maybe one or two or three of us. There's only one way we'll ever find out. Perhaps I'm the one; in that case, as Ole says, that's that—there won't *be* any future population—not if I'm all that's left to provide one. If I'm not, It may be one or more of you. If I pick one, and the others go away, perhaps the only one who could father a child will be one of those who leave. You see?"

We saw. And none of us liked it. We'd been picked, among other things, because we were free and unattached sexually. But that didn't mean we hadn't had pasts, and it didn't mean we'd shed all the preconceptions and attitudes of our culture. We weren't brutes or throwbacks, any of us. We were normally

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sexed, healthy young men, but we'd been bred in the tradition of romantic love, and this cold-blooded approach was distasteful to us.

Yet the alternative was worse, and I don't mean the alternative of turning ourselves into a celibate community and letting mankind, so far as we could know, come to its end with our deaths. If we couldn't consider this problem objectively, and act on it in a civilized manner, then sooner or later one, or more, of us men would develop the fixation we call falling in love. So, probably, would Amy herself. Outside of the unlikely contingency that Amy and some particular man, and only he, would be the ones affected, that would mean the end of any communal co-operation—it would mean jealousy, and strife, and disaster.

Besides, what Amy had said about possible sterility among us made sense. We had reached an impasse.

I might have known it. It was Ole, the ex-dairy farmer, who came up with an idea.

"It's not necessary—we needn't —" he stuttered. "Oh, hell, I've inseminated hundreds of cows. That way, we'd never know who the father was."

"We might," said Jim Forbes dryly.

It was up to me—I was the Southerner here.

"It might be lucky for the future of humanity, Jim," I said, "if the paternal blood-line came through somebody with more intellect than a roughneck who never finished grammar school."

It cost me a lot to say it, but I felt better when I had.

Yet when Amy threw me a look of gratitude, a thrill of alarm shot through me: did that mean she actually was attracted by that—? At least, I kept that to myself; I wasn't proud of it.

Ole's common sense rescued us again.

"This doesn't mean we have to start raising a family today or tomorrow," he said gruffly. "We've got more immediate jobs to think of first. If nothing else, I'd have to scout around and see if there's a syringe somewhere—they must have had some kind of laboratory or at least an infirmary.

"In fact, I think it would be a good idea—if the rest of you agree, that is: we want to do things democratically—"

"Go ahead, Ole," Jim said, and we other two nodded.

"Well, let's find out first of all just what there is in this building. Amy's inventoried the food supply, but let's get after the clothing and equipment. For one thing, let's find something we can make lights with after dark. Our big problem's going to be water, but for the immediate present we can go unwashed and drink fruit juice. In this climate we're not going to need much in the way of heating, but we do have to discover some way to cook.

"Let's divide these tasks up and

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each of us make lists so we know what we've got. Then tomorrow we can see about the possibility of getting out of doors and inspecting that. And next, if that is O.K., we must hunt for means of transportation elsewhere, if only for exploration."

"The very first thing to do," I said firmly, "is to lock and bolt the doors of the Hibernatorium, and seal it off from the rest of the building." They all nodded. "And since I made the first inspection, before the rest of you were awake, there's no need of subjecting anybody else to the ordeal; I'll take care of that myself."

There were no candles, but we found some flashlights with perpetual batteries. We turned in soon after it grew dark. The staff had done themselves well; there was a comfortable bedroom for each of us upstairs, with others to spare. There were bathrooms, too, but they were of no use without water. We would have to contrive something in the way of a latrine; meanwhile we could use a disposal can in the storeroom.

My last thought as I fell into an exhausted sleep was about Amy.

We were all up with the first light. We ate, and then Jim volunteered to try the out-of-doors. We found an entrance with a small vestibule he could close behind him. He was back in a few minutes.

"The Geiger counter kept clicking," he reported. "I think we could breathe without danger if we had somewhere safe to get to quick, but not otherwise."

"That settles it," said Ole. "This building is tight, and the air in it has kept fresh so far. We'll have to postpone that part of the program. For the present, this is where we stay."

"A fort against the enemy," Amy murmured . . . An enemy we couldn't see, and didn't know how to fight. There was a long pause.

Then Jim said, "I've been thinking. This will have to be a very short postponement, whether the air outside is entirely safe or not."

"What do you mean, Jim?" asked Amy.

"I mean that we're acting like a bunch of blind idiots. This place is a prison, not a fortress; and it's a prison where we ourselves have thrown away the key. We can't go on long without lights and cooked food and stay civilized; and we can't go on without water and stay alive at all. Even the air we breathe will give out eventually, huge as this building is—to say nothing of the fact that we're living in a charnel-house, with that Hibernatorium upstairs."

"We have every intention of leaving when it's safe," Ole objected.

"And when will that be? We don't know how long it's been already; we don't even know how much older we are than when we were put to sleep. We look the same to one another—our hair hasn't turned grey, we're still young—but how young?

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"As for our becoming the nucleus of a new population, no matter what scheme we devise, it's an utter impossibility while we stay here. Could we raise children under these conditions? Could Amy or any other woman *have* a baby here that would be born alive?"

"I've said all along," Amy interposed, her cheeks pink, "that I was willing to do anything we all agreed on soberly and conscientiously."

"Exactly, and how much sobriety and conscientiousness are we displaying? Let's cut out the romantic nonsense. Let's face the fact that what we have here is just four human beings shut up in a concrete box.

"Whom do you expect to rescue us—explorers from some other planet? Either we're the world's only survivors, or we're not. The only way we can find out, and make reasonable plans for the future if we are to have a future, is to protect ourselves as best we can and go on out, whatever the Geiger counters say, take our chances, and try to discover what the situation really is.

"Then if we do find we're all there are, we can either come back here and die slowly, or stay out there and die fast. In either case, we might as well give up any idea of reconstructing a civilization on a base as narrow as this. When it comes down to it, what are we without other human beings to co-operate with?—just one woman and three men. If the two others of you want to fight to the death over the one woman, you're welcome: no offense to you, Amy, but I'm just not interested. I have other concerns, more important to me, to think about—such as keeping alive as long as possible."

We three others sat in somber silence. We knew Jim Forbes was right; we just didn't want to believe it, or to give up our grandiose dream of becoming the founders of a new (and of course better) humanity. To go out into that perilous, problematic world was like leaving the womb for the second time.

"We're safe here for another day or two, anyway," Ole said slowly at last. "Let's sleep on it tonight and decide tomorrow."

That night it rained—a rare event always in this desert country. We had no idea what season, even, it might be—calendars were out as well as clocks, and in the Southwest there is little change in temperature between summer and winter, except that summer is hotter, if possible. It's always cool at night, the year round, on the open desert.

I was awakened by the rain. I got up—our windows were all sealed, of course, but I could see the drops streaking the one-way glass. I had some crazy idea of going outside and collecting rainwater, till I woke sufficiently to realize that it would probably be pure poison. It was while I was standing at the window that I heard a faint, furtive sound.

At once I thought of Amy's room

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—had she locked her door? Then I listened intently; and I knew.

The sound came from outside.

I peered out into the darkness, and at first I could see nothing whatever. Then my eyes caught a shadowy movement.

One by one they separated themselves from the solid dark behind them. Were they animals? Had wolves come to the desert? No—they were crawling, but they were men.

They could not see me, but gradually I could see them plainly. There were ten of them. I could even see the rags and tatters in which they were clad. Their heads were down, and inch by inch, foot by foot, they were encircling the building.

Very quietly I dressed and left my room, and opened the unlocked doors of Jim's and Ole's rooms. I shook them awake, and whispered my news. Luckily, they understood at once, jumped up, and threw on some clothes. But we had no weapons of any kind.

"What about Amy?" Ole whispered.

"Let her sleep," I replied.

"Nonsense," Jim retorted. "We're going to need everyone we've got."

He was right; this was no time for medieval chivalry. I scratched at her door until she woke and came to it. I explained hastily, and she said calmly, "I'll be with you in a minute." Amy, I reflected with relief, wasn't the fainting or hysterical kind.

My eyes were most accustomed to the darkness, so I ran again to the nearest window. They were posted all around—I could see them to either side. They were standing now, and they were big, burly men who looked like savages. How many years, I thought in a sudden panic, had it been? Long enough for our countrymen to turn into those frightening creatures outside? I fought the panic down, and hurried back to the others; Amy had joined them.

"Perhaps they only want refuge," she suggested.

"In that case they'd have come openly by day, not waited for the first dark night since there have been signs of life in this building. No, they're enemies: I know it."

"Here's the best plan," said Ole. "We'll wait downstairs in the hall until we hear where they're trying to break in, then we'll concentrate on that point and meet them with everything we've got. They outnumber us more than two to one, but they've lost the element of surprise they must be counting on. At least, the building is securely locked, and they're not likely to break in easily."

Jim Forbes started violently.

"Oh, my God!" he exclaimed. "I didn't lock the door behind me when I came back from testing the air!"

"You fool—" Ole began, but I stopped him.

"Shut up!" I snapped. "How was Jim to guess anything like this? It

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just means that that's where we'll wait for them. Now, how about something to fight them with? Amy, can you get about in the dark and hustle up anything you can find that can be used as a weapon? Get some knives from the kitchen, and anything heavy that can be used as a club or a blackjack."

That kept her away from danger for the moment, anyway, and we men could meet them with bare fists if she hadn't got back by the time they broke in. They might not discover the unlocked door—they might have reconnoitered before and found then that all the entrances were barred.

I had a nasty second when I wondered if they were waiting for reinforcements. But I kept quiet; they didn't look like an organized group that would know anything about strategy. A minute later I knew I was right; somebody tried the door behind us, then there was a muffled call from the one we were guarding, and the sound of running feet.

The door burst open.

We were waiting and they didn't expect us. That was our only advantage. If they had been watching the building, they must have seen our lights, and known that some of us had revived, but in the middle of the night they must have thought we were all asleep. Probably their real object was not to attack us, but to steal whatever they could find. They must have tried many times before without success, and hoped, now that people were up and about in the building, it would be easier to find a way into the hitherto impregnable fortress. Unfortunately, they were right.

It was as dark within as without, and none of us could see one another. But that didn't matter. We three men had hurriedly discussed our tactics. Not only were we badly outnumbered, but we were all still emaciated and weak from our long coma. In our normal shape, we were quite capable of tackling the invaders one by one as they entered and knocking them out, but we couldn't count on doing that, in this battle with tough, half-wild enemies. They must be tough, or they could not have survived unknown years of struggle in a world such as theirs must have been since the big blow-up.

We ranged ourselves against the wall near the door, Jim and I on one side, Ole, the biggest of us, on the other. Back in the kitchen wing, I could hear Amy rummaging for weapons, and hoped she would come soon. As the first figure sneaked through the door, Jim tripped him neatly, and I brought the heel of my shoe hard against what I hoped was the back of his head.

He yelled, so I hadn't put him out. I kicked again, and this time I made it—he grunted and lay still. But he had alerted the rest of them. I'd had a faint hope that when they discovered they were going to meet opposition, the others would run; but no such luck. They burst in now in a pack, and the brawl became a

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free-for-all. I had no time to see what Ole and Jim were doing; I had somebody on my back trying to pull me down, and somebody else holding my throat in a death-grip.

I felt my lungs collapsing; then I managed to pry one of the fingers loose and bend it backwards until my attacker bellowed with pain and let go for an instant. I heaved and kicked sideways, and my shod foot hit a naked shin. I'd learned some judo in my day, but there wasn't room to practice it. I kept wishing desperately that Amy would arrive with those knives—but if she did, how could she get into that melee and deliver them to the right people?

She'd had the same thought. And —I found it afterwards on the floor, where one of the invaders had grabbed it and then let it slip—she'd acquired a heavy iron frying-pan. Standing back at arm's length she swung it, and fortunately the heads she hit weren't ours. "Rog! Jim! Ole!" she called. "Catch!" Ole and I did, and they were good hefty meat knives. Jim wasn't so lucky; at the time, he was down under three husky brutes; but the knife she threw him went point first into the back of one of them, and he screamed and jumped off Jim. It was only a flesh wound, but it bled plenty, and he ran howling toward the open door.

That started a stampede. They had no weapons, and they'd had enough. Probably they thought there were more of us than there were, and they couldn't know how weak and shaky we all were. Three minutes later the hall was empty except for two silent huddled figures lying on the floor, and we were trying to get our breath back.

We listened till the running footsteps died in the distance; then we bolted the door by which they had entered and started to assess the damage. Somebody found two of the flashlights and we turned them on.

We were all bruised and battered; my neck ached from the fingers that had tried to choke me. Jim's nose and lip were bleeding and he'd lost a tooth. Ole groaned with every breath and kept holding his side; my guess was that some ribs were broken.

Jim and I bent over the prostrate figures. They weren't dead, just unconscious. Jim was for throwing them out in the rain, but we weren't up to it; they were both big burly guys.

"There's some rope around somewhere," I said. "Let's tie them up to keep them safe and when they've come to we can deal with them. We can use them; if we can get them to talk we may find out a lot we don't know."

"If they *can* talk," said Ole sourly between groans.

"Good Lord, they're just people —they're just like us," Jim objected. "There can't have been enough time gone by for another generation to have grown up, or we'd all be old and grey, and we aren't. They're not

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mutations—just tough babies who've survived conditions that have killed off the ones who wouldn't take it. They prove the air is breathable, anyway. And they'll talk, once we can talk to them."

"Amy!" I called. "Find that coil of rope we saw and bring it here, will you? It's O.K. now—everything's quiet again."

There was no answer. I waited a minute, and then left Jim and Ole to guard our prisoners and went back in the kitchen wing to find her. She wasn't there.

I brought the rope and we trussed the two up. We had no water to revive them with, but we stretched them out and put blankets over them and pillows under their heads. One of them had a lump on his head the size of a walnut, though the skin wasn't broken. I hoped that was the one I'd kicked. He'd been the first one in and might be their leader.

Jim and Ole went off to the infirmary to try to find something to clean up Jim's cuts and to tape Ole's sore side, and I started through the building looking for Amy. It wasn't like her to hide from a fight, especially after she'd already been in it wielding her frying-pan, but she was no Amazon and she might have blacked out from the excitement and be lying somewhere in a faint.

She wasn't in her bedroom, or in any of ours. I went systematically, more and more puzzled and then scared, through the entire big building. The Hibernatorium was still securely locked on the outside. I went in every closet, and in rooms we hadn't entered since we awoke. I even looked under the beds. The other two came out of the infirmary to see what I was about, and joined me in the search.

We scoured the whole building thoroughly. There was only one answer.

Amy wasn't there.

We looked at one another in shocked silence. Ole broke it.

"Good God," he said huskily. "They were all men!"

"Let's go!" I cried. "We can catch up with them yet!"

"Take it easy, Rog," Jim said quietly. "Let's use our brains. They must have a hideout, and by now they may have reached it. We couldn't find it in the dark and the rain. We've got to plan.

"And what could we do, in our condition, against heaven knows how many of them?"

"It's easy enough for you to talk—"

I choked up. "I'm sorry."

"Forget it. And don't think I'm not with you. Amy's one of us—aside from being a girl. We'll get her, and we'll bring her back, and we'll get even with anybody who's done her harm. We can't help her unless we do it sensibly. Look at Ole—he can scarcely walk."

"I can navigate," Ole growled. "But Jim's talking sense — we haven't a chance if we just rush off helter-skelter after her now."

Horrible visions flashed across my

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mind—Amy dead, Amy helpless in the grasp of those ravening beasts. I groaned aloud. It had taken something like this to make me realize how I felt about her.

"Besides," said Jim, "are we sure that's what happened? We saw those fellows leave—maybe we were too confused to be sure, but we'd have known if they'd been carrying her with them. And she has a voice—she'd have cried out, wouldn't she? We, none of us, have any idea of her whereabouts since she called to us to catch those knives."

"What else *could* have happened?" Ole demanded.

"She could have left while we were busy with that bunch here."

"Left? For where? Why?" I wanted to know.

"I don't know any more than you do. I just want us to consider everything. The important thing is to get her back. It can't be long now till daylight. Let's make our plans."

We'd drifted into the Administration Office again by now. As if by agreement, Ole and I yielded the floor to Jim. I was the fittest of us physically, but he was the boy with the brains and education. He paced up and down while we huddled in chairs; Ole looked as if he'd never be able to get out of his again, and I wasn't feeling any too hot. Jim's cut mouth and nose made it difficult for him to talk, but he managed a sort of muffled monotone.

"Let's discuss this objectively," he said. "There are only two possibilities. Either she was kidnapped, or she left under her own steam, with some purpose we don't understand. If she'd simply run away because she was frightened, and hidden somewhere, she'd be back by now yelling to us to let her in; besides, that's not like Amy, even the little I know her.

"Ole's in the worst shape of us three. He ought to stay here to guard our prisoners and to let us in and out—shut up, Ole; you got wounded in a good cause, but you're not up to heavy exercise right now. Besides, someone's got to be here in case Amy does turn up of her own accord.

"That leaves only two of us—one to try to find that hideout and somehow get Amy out of it if she's there, and one to try to figure out where else she could be and hunt for her. One man can't fight a battalion, so if she's been captured she's got to be rescued by strategy, not force. The same is true of any bad situation she might have got into if she left here under her own power."

"I want to be the one for the hideout," I put in. "When I think of those brutes—" I shuddered.

"O.K., that's your job, then, if you can promise not to burst in like a one-man rescue army. Now, how are we going to trace her?"

There was a moan from the hall; one of our captives was beginning to show signs of life.

"Let him lie," said Ole. "I'll attend to them when you're gone."

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"Footsteps?" I suggested. "The rain has softened the ground."

"It stopped raining long ago—hadn't you noticed? I doubt if footsteps will show much by dawn. But of course that would be our first clue—both Amy's and the men's, if we can track them. You'll have a better chance than I will on that—there were eight of them pounding out of here in a hurry. On the other hand, wherever they've gone to is likely to be a lot farther than where Amy is if she left here by herself.

"My guess is, the hideout is in caves in the foothills, and that's five miles or more away. That will be your objective; all I can do is scan the desert in the other direction and keep circling till I find something—if I do."

I felt myself getting the shakes again. Suddenly I remembered bitterly that earnest, unemotional colloquy right here in the Administration Office, only two days before. "Mother of a new humanity!" If Amy was going to be the mother, I knew damned well I wanted to be the father. And now—

I tried to keep my mind off it; I needed all my wits if I was going to be of any help in this crisis. I glanced at the window. The sky was graying. It was almost dawn.

"Wait a minute!" Ole cried suddenly. "I just had an idea. Why should we go out hunting blindly for what these fellows out in the hall can tell us? They both ought to be out of it by now. And we can make them talk," he added grimly.

"How stupid can we get?" Jim assented disgustedly. "Come on!"

We trooped out to inspect our captives. One of them was awake, all right—he stared at us malevolently. The other was still out, but he was stirring and muttering.

Jim prodded the conscious one with his toe.

"Talk:" he ordered gruffly. "Who are you and where did you come from? What did you want here?"

The man grimaced. It was light enough now inside the building to see it, and to see them. They were big and well muscled, both of them, but skinny, with unkempt beards, long, tangled hair, and weather-beaten skin. They were dressed in torn rags of shirts and trousers that looked as if they were made of sacking, and their dirty feet were bare.

"Go on, you," I chimed in. "You heard what the man said. Talk, if you want to get out of this place alive."

The man's dry lips opened.

"Water!" he croaked.

We had no water. But Ole gave me the nod and I went back in the kitchen and fished out a can of orange juice and opened it. I handed it to Ole and he knelt painfully and let the man drink. Jim held his head up so he wouldn't choke. He swallowed some of it and cleared his throat.

And then, to our utter amazement, this tough guy, who a few hours before had been trying to kill us, whined in a baby tone: "Why

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you fellers treat us like this? We never done you no harm!"

"No, you merely broke into our house and—" Ole began contemptuously.

"It *ain't* your house," the man objected. "It belongs to everybody. We don't know what it's for, but we know it's guvvimint propity. We're Americans just as much as you are. And you jumped us—all we did was defend ourselves."

"Swell story!" Jim retorted. "If you thought you had a right here, why didn't you come in the daylight, like honest men, instead of waiting for a dark, rainy night?"

"We was afraid. Our scouts seen the lights last night and we didn't know who was there. It's always been empty and we always thought the guvvimint people cleared out after the big crash. We tried lots of times to get in, but the doors and windows was all tight. We figgered maybe if somebody's opened it up again we could sneak in while they was asleep and pick up some things our folks could use. It's ours just as much as it's yours."

"To hell with that!" I shouted. "What did you do with the girl?"

"What girl?" He sounded astonished. "I never seen no girl. We got—"

A voice interrupted. The other man was awake again too. He must have been lying there listening.

"There *was* a girl screamed something, Bill," he whispered huskily. "She musta had a knife—I seen Garth bleedin' like a stuck pig."

"Gimme a drink," he pleaded. "I'm dyin' of thirst."

I turned automatically to fetch another can of orange juice. My eyes caught a glimpse through one of the front windows. The sun was coming up by now and it was almost full daylight.

"Jim! Ole! Look!" I screeched.

Walking up the roadway, calmly and serenely, was Amy Sackett!

We all three dashed for the front door, but I got it open first and ran.

"For God's sake!" I sputtered. "Where have you been! What happened? We've been nearly crazy!"

She gazed at me with mild surprise.

"Why, Rog," she said. "I should think you'd have guessed. I couldn't be any more use in that fight, and when they started to run out, the only sensible thing was for one of us to follow them and try to find out who they were and where they came from. I was the only one who could, so I did. I knew I could breathe the air if they could."

"You damned fool!" I cried: I was almost weeping. "We had you kidnapped and raped and murdered and I don't know what! If anything had happened to you—"

"Why, Rog!" she repeated softly, and the loveliest smile lit up her face. At which second, of course, Jim and Ole caught up with us.

We hustled Amy back into the building, all of us explaining at once about the two captives and about our plans to go searching for her. The first thing we did was to

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unbind them and help them to their feet. They were stiff and sore but neither was badly hurt. We pushed them into chairs in the Administration Office and they both sat there staring dumbly at Amy.

"What I started to say," said Bill slowly, "was that we got plenty of girls of our own. But she's sure a pretty one—ain't she, Joe?"

Amy yawned widely.

"She's sure a tired one," she countered. "I must have walked all of ten miles in the dark after about two hours' sleep. Did they tell you about their colony? I got a good look at it."

"Not yet, but they will," Jim answered. They understand now that the whole fracas was a misconception on both sides. You tell us what you've found out, Amy, and then get yourself some sleep, while we check with our friends here."

"Well, it's in the caves in the foothills—"

"Just what I thought," Jim interrupted.

"And there's about 40 of them—is that right?"

"Fourteen men, 18 women, and ten kids, the last count," said Bill. "That's funny, ain't it, when you come to think of it?—the women turned out to be tougher than the men."

"Biological superiority," said Ole Arnesen from his agricultural learning.

"Huh?"

"Never mind. What we want to know is—are the kids all right?"

"All right? Sure—why not?" said Joe in a surprised tone. "Oh, I see what you mean. No, none of them ain't got two heads or 20 fingers, if that's what's on your mind. We're the ones that *wasn't* affected. Most of us was miners and was below ground when it come. Not the women, of course, but like I say, they was tougher. The ones that wasn't, men and women alike, died off—or we got rid of 'em," he added harshly.

"How long has it been?" asked Amy abruptly.

"Since the crash? Well, we ain't got no calendars, but going by the seasons, I'd say it was about 11 years."

"Oh, my goodness!" Amy squealed. "I'm 34 years old!"

We all laughed, and I swear it was the first time I'd heard anybody laugh since they put me to sleep in the Hibernatorium. Not that it made me any too happy myself to learn I was 36.

"And another thing," Bill remarked. "We're all kinds, and we aim to stay that way. We've got Mex, and Navaho, and a Chinaman, and even some—Oh!" He seemed really to notice Jim for the first time, and his jaw dropped. "I guess that's all right with you," he ended weakly.

We laughed again.

"What we was aiming at," said Joe, "what we'd kinda planned on when we thought this place was empty, only we couldn't get into it, was to move in here and make it a

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kind of headquarters till we could build ourselves homes again. We don't want our kids to grow up savages."

"Truly, don't you know what this place is?" Jim asked him.

"No, just some sort of top secret guvvimint thing. What is it?"

We told them.

Joe scrambled to his feet.

"Come on, Bill," he gasped. "I'm gettin' out of here! How do we know they ain't all contaminated? And I ain't stayin' nowheres with a room full of dead stiffs upstairs!"

"I can assure you it's safe and so are we," I declared. "We've been protected here—we were afraid to leave. Now we can open up and stay.

"As for the Hibernatorium, all of us working together can carry out the bodies and bury them and disinfect everything. It won't be a nice job, but we can do it."

"I don't like it, Bill," said Joe uneasily. "I'm gonna go back and vote to go hunt for the Center, like we said we might if we couldn't make do here."

"Well, I dunno," Bill pondered. "We can't stand the caves much longer, specially with more kids on the way, but we don't know how far off a Center is, and if we could fix this place up and move in with these folks—"

"What's a Center?" Amy interrupted.

"They're places, different parts of the country, where they've got survivors collected in underground shelters. There was a man scouting around a year ago, in a jet plane, found us and wanted to fly us in to one. But it didn't sound much better than the caves, and we wouldn't. Now maybe we ought to, but we let the man go and I don't know how we'd find out where the nearest one is. He said they was going to gradually—how did he put it, Joe?"

"Redeem the blasted areas, he said. He called the Centers—what was that egghead word?—something like 'atoms' or — no 'nuclei,' that was it."

"Yeah, I remember now," Bill agreed. " 'Nuclei of reconstruction.' But how we'd ever—"

He stopped dead. We all did, startled speechless by a sound.

A familiar, commonplace sound.

The visiphone was ringing.

For a second we all stood paralyzed, then there was a mad dash.

It was Jim who reached it first. His hand shook so that he could scarcely lift the receiver.

A face showed on the screen, dim and distorted, but still recognizably a human face. A voice spoke, and it was speaking English.

"Come closer," the voice said. "This thing isn't working right yet, and I can't see well. How many of you are there left?"

Jim opened his mouth, but no sound came out. "F-four from Operation Cassandra," I managed to answer.

"Is that all?" The voice sounded disappointed. I felt like apologizing.

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"And we've got two men here from a cave colony in the foothills," I added hastily.

"Oh, yes, I know about them. We'll get in touch with them later. But it's you people I'm concerned about now. We were afraid you might all be dead."

"The rest are," I said. "Locked in the Hibernatorium. And the staff's all gone. They were gone when we four woke up, three days ago."

"I know about them. Dead of the sickness, all but one. Brock's left—he was the chief medico: remember him? He's with us in the Center. He insisted we try to reach you when we finally got the visiphone working.

"Only three days ago—it's lucky we didn't get through earlier. When our man was out last year, scouting, the cave people told him there was nobody in the building. Do you know about the Centers?"

"We just learned about them."

"We've got room for you here."

Ole stepped to the speaker.

"We thought we'd stay here and take the cave people in with us—" he began.

"Nonsense!" said the voice brusquely. "You're still under government orders, remember. We're going to burn the whole place down, with the dead in it, once we get you out and remove the furnishings and supplies.

"We'll pick you up in a jet tomorrow. Get yourselves ready. As I recall, there's plenty of flat desert around you for a landing-field. Tell the colonists we'll come for them next, if they've changed their minds—you can let us know, when we come for you."

"O.K., will do," I said. "Who's this speaking, anyway?"

"Enderby Houghton," said the voice dryly.

I did a doubletake. The six-star general, the chief of staff of the Army of the United States!

"I—I beg your pardon, sir," I gulped. "I should have recognized you."

He chuckled sadly.

"We're all changed a lot, son," he said. "And there's no Army left, and no enemy, either—we're all one world now, what's left of us.

"Well, we can tell you when we see you. No time to talk longer now—this power's getting weaker."

He rang off.

As you'll have guessed, this is written from Center 50, near where Salt Lake City used to be. The Center will be closed soon; we've got a lot of territory around here cleaned up, and in ten years more we'll have farming country and towns again.

Amy's and my marriage was the first one celebrated here, though Jim's wasn't long after; Althea was one of the girls from the cave colony whom he met after they all joined us here. Ole married Helga, who was at the Center when we came. It's been a good life, these last five years, full of useful work.

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We were scared after Amy became pregnant, but our Billy (he's named for our friend Bill, our captive that night) is a perfectly normal boy, and he's nearly three years old now. We aren't worried about the child who is coming.

One day recently I finally got up my nerve to say to Amy:

"Look, honey, tell me something. Why did you really go off by yourself in the desert that night? It was such a foolhardy thing to do."

Her face dimpled, that cute way it does.

"Haven't you ever guessed, darling?" she asked sweetly. "As soon as I saw there were other men alive, I wanted to get away from you, of course!"

"Have it your own way, my love," I responded loftily. "If you're too modest to let us make a famous heroine of you, we'll have to submit, I suppose."

"But I notice when you'd taken a look at the other men, you came chasing right back to me!"

I had the last word that time—unless you count a kiss as a reply.

YES, GERALDINE, THERE ARE SAUCERS!

BUT NOT THE kind you've been hearing about!

There really are things, though, that look like flying saucers!

Shiny hollowed spheres twelve feet in diameter. Smaller ones two-and-a-half feet across. And a saucer-shaped thing, thirty feet in diameter, still in the designing stages. In fact, shapes as large as a hundred feet in diameter have been proposed.

These are satellites of the very near future.

Comparative featherweights, these objects are made of thin, tough plastic and covered with aluminum foil. The twelve footer weighs only nine pounds, while the two-and-a-half foot sphere weighs eleven ounces. When shot into space by two-stage rockets, they will be folded into packs no larger than a woman's handbag or a small suitcase, we are told. Once they are at the desired altitude, they will be inflated by a small cartridge containing nitrogen. The cartridge weighs six pounds.

These space vehicles (or satellites, junior grade) will carry instruments for measuring the magnetic and gravitational fields of the Earth, supply new weather information, some perhaps acting as reflectors of radar and television waves, still others "collecting" solar energy to run their own instruments.

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a matter of traces

by . . . Frank Herbert

There will undoubtedly be a time when Tomorrow's bureaucrats will wish to question such dangerous survivals . . .

Herday, Domen 18, 7102 (*N.C.*)
Wershteen City, Aspidiske VII

THE Special Subcommittee on Intergalactic Culture (*see page* 33) met, pursuant to call, at 1600 in the committee room, 8122 Senate Office Building, Wershteen City, Senator Jorj C. Zolam, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Also present: Senator Arden G. Pingle of Proxistu I; Mergis W. Ledder, counsel to the subcommittee; Jorj X. McKie, saboteur extraordinary to the committee.

Senator Zolam: The subcommittee will be in order. Our first witness will be the Hon. Glibbis Hablar, Secretary of Fusion.

We are glad to see you, Mr. Secretary. We believe that you have some of the best cultural fusion experts in the universe working in your Department, and we are in the habit of leaning heavily upon them for our records of factual data.

As you know, our subcommittee is working under Senate Resolution 1443 of the 803d Congress, First Session, to make a full and complete investigation of complaints received from economy groups that the His-

Though Frank Herbert started free-lancing only a few years ago, he has been a working writer for almost twenty years, as an editor with several Washington State newspapers and later with the Santa Rosa (Calif.) Press-Democrat. *His stories have appeared in* Collier's, Esquire, *and various SF magazines.*

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torical Preservation Teams of the Bureau of Cultural Affairs are excessively wasteful of their funds.

Now, Mr. Secretary, I understand that you are prepared to present a sample of the work being done by your Historical Preservation Teams.

Secretary Hablar: Yes, Senator. I have here a tri-di record of an interview with one of the early pioneers to Gomeisa III, also a transcription of the interview, and some explanatory matter necessary for a complete understanding of this exhibit.

Senator Zolam: Do you wish to project the tri-di at this time?

Secretary Hablar: Unfortunately, Senator, I am unable to do that. My projector has been officially sabotaged—presumably to save the time of the committee. I am embarrassed by my inability to . . .

Senator Zolam: Committee Saboteur McKie will enter an official explanation for the record.

Saboteur McKie: The Secretary may make the official excuse that his tri-di recording was faulty.

Secretary Hablar: Thank you, Mr. McKie. Your courtesy is deeply appreciated. May I add to my official excuse that the faulty recording is attributable to antiquated equipment which our appropriation for the last biennium was insufficient to renew or replace?

Senator Zolam: That request will be considered later by the full committee. Now, Mr. Secretary, you do have a written transcription of this interview?

Secretary Hablar: Yes, Senator.

Senator Zolam: What is the significance of this particular interview?

Secretary Hablar: The interview was recorded at Lauh Village on Gomeisa III. We consider this interview to be one of the best we've ever recorded. It is particularly interesting from the standpoint of the cultural tracings revealed in the vernacular used by the elderly gentleman interviewed.

Senator Zolam: Who did your men interview?

Secretary Hablar: His name is Hilmot Gustin. Students of intergalactic familial relationships recognize the name Gustin, or Gusten, or Gousting, or Gaustern—as stemming from the cultural milieu of Procyon out of the Mars Migration.

Senator Zolam: Will you identify this Gustin for the record, please?

Secretary Hablar: His parents took him to Gomeisa III in the pioneer days when he was nine-years-old. That was the year 6873, New Calendar, making him 238-years-old now. Gustin's family was in the second migratory wave that arrived three standard years after the first settlement. He is now retired, living with a niece.

Senator Zolam: Do you have a likeness of Gustin?

Secretary Hablar: Only on the wire, Senator. However, he is described in one of the team reports as . . . excuse me a moment, I believe I have the report right here. Yes . . . as " . . . a crotchety old

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citizen who looks and acts about half his age. He is about two meters tall, narrow face, long grey hair worn in the ancient twin-braid style, watery blue eyes, a sharp chin and enormous ears and nose."

Senator Zolam: A very vivid description.

Secretary Hablar: Thank you, Senator. Some of our people take an artistic pride in their work.

Senator Zolam: That's quite apparent, Mr. Secretary. Now, are you prepared to submit the transcribed interview at this time?

Secretary Hablar: Yes, Senator. Do you want me to read it?

Senator Zolam: That will not be necessary. Submit it to the robo-sec here, and the interview will be printed at this point in the record.

INTERVIEW WITH HILMOT GUSTIN, PIONEER SETTLER ON GOMEISA III, TAKEN BY HISTORICAL PRESERVATION

PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL TRACES IN THE GOMEISA PLANETS BY THE BUREAU OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

HEARINGS

before the

SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERGALACTIC CULTURE

of the

COMMITTEE ON GALACTIC FUSION, DISPERSION, MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

INTERGALACTIC SENATE

803d CONGRESS

First Session

pursuant to

S. Res. 1443

A resolution to investigate the activities of the Historical Preservation Teams of the Bureau of Cultural Affairs

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Part 1

Intergalactic Department of Fusion, Bureau of Cultural Affairs
Domen 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26: 7102 (New Calendar)

Printed for the use of the Committee on Galactic Fusion, Dispersion, Migration and Settlement

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TEAM 579 OF THE BUREAU OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF FUSION.

Interviewer Simsu Yaggata: Here we are in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Presby Kilkau in the village of Lauh, Gomeisa III. We are here to interview Hilmot Gustin, the gentleman seated across from me beside his niece, Mrs. Kilkau. Mr. Gustin is one of the few surviving pioneers to Gomeisa III, and he has kindly agreed to tell us some of the things he experienced first hand in those early days. I want to thank you, Mrs. Kilkau, for your hospitality in inviting me here today.

Mrs. Kilkau: It is we who are honored, Mr. Yaggata.

Gustin: I still think this is a lot of frip-frap, Bessie. I was supposed to go bilker fishing today.

Mrs. Kilkau: But, Uncle Gus.

Gustin: How about you, Mr. Yaggata? Wouldn't you rather go fishing?

Yaggata: I'm sorry, sir. Our schedule doesn't permit me the time.

Gustin: Too bad. The bilker are biting like a flock of hungry fangbirds.

Yaggata: I wonder if we could begin by having you tell us when you first came to Gomeisa III?

Gustin: That was in '64.

Yaggata: That would be 6864?

Gustin: Yes. I was just a wicky boy then. My pap moved us from Procyon IV in the second wave.

Yaggata: I understand you come from a long line of pioneers, sir.

Gustin: My folks never did stay put after Mars. We spent five generations on Mars—then, just like boomer seeds: spang! all over creation!

Yaggata: You came out in the Mars Migration?

Gustin: That was my grandfather went to Procyon IV. My pap was born enroute. I was born on Procyon.

Yaggata: And what motivated your father to migrate here to Gomeisa III?

Gustin: He heard it was green. Procyon's nothing but one big sandstorm.

Yaggata: And what did he say when he found the vegetation was purple?

Gustin: He said anything was better than yellow dust.

Yaggata: And this is a very beautiful planet.

Gustin: One of the prettiest in the whole universe!

Yaggata: Now, sir, we're interested in the details of your life as it was in those early days. How did you find conditions when you arrived?

Gustin: Rougher than a chugger's . . . Are you recording now, Mr. Yaggata?

Yaggata: Yes, I am.

Gustin: We found it pretty rough.

Yaggata: How soon after arrival did you take up your own claim?

Gustin: Ten or fifteen days we

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waited in the bracks with all the other chums. Then we came directly to Lauh. There were two other families in the district: the Pijuns and the Kilkaus. Bessie's husband is a grandson of old Effus Kilkau.

Yaggata: What did it look like around here in those days?

Gustin: Nothing but fritch brush and wally bugs, an occasional tiger snake and some duka-dukas, and, of course, those danged fangbirds. [1]

Yaggata: Most of the universe is familiar with the terrible fangbirds, sir. We can all be thankful they've been exterminated.

Gustin: They haven't been exterminated! They're just waiting in some hidden valley for the day when . . .

Mrs. Kilkau: Now, Uncle Gus!

Gustin: Well, they are!

Yaggata: The duka-dukas — those are the little fuzzy dog-like creatures, aren't they?

Gustin: That's right. Their fuzz is stiff as wire and barbed. Scratch worse than a fritch thorn.

Yaggata: What was the first thing you did when you came here?

Gustin: We took sick with the toogies!

Yaggata: The toogies?

Gustin: The medics call it Fremont's boils after old Doc Fremont who was in the first wave. He's the one discovered they were caused by the micro-pollen of the fritch flowers.

Yaggata: I see. Did you build a house immediately?

Gustin: Well, sir, in between scratching the toogies we threw up a sod shelter with a shake roof, and piled fritch brush around for a compound to keep out the duka-dukas.

Yaggata: That must have been exciting—listening to the weird screams of the fangbirds, the whistling calls of the duka-dukas.

Gustin: We all had too much work to do, and no time to feel excited.

Yaggata: Most of the early pioneers have their names attached to some element of this planet, sir. Was your family so honored?

Gustin: Heh, heh! Gustin swamp! That's what we've got! I'll tell you, Mr. Yaggata, Bessie wanted me to make out like our family was a pack of heroes, but the truth is we weren't anything but dirt farmers, and with a swamp making up about two-thirds of our dirt.

Yaggata: But you certainly must've had some interesting experiences while carving a ranch out of that wilderness.

Gustin: It's a funny thing, mister, but what some folks call *interesting experiences* aren't anything but labor and misery to those who're having them.

Yaggata: Wasn't there anything to lighten the load? Something amusing, perhaps?

Gustin: Well, sir, there was the

[1] Fangbirds, or pseudo-Pterodactylus, native to Gomeisa III. A flying reptile, now extinct, that grew to a wingspan of ten meters. Creature characterized by venomous fangs (formic acid) protruding from roof of nose hood.

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time pap bought the rollit[2] and he. . .

Mrs. Kilkau: Oh, now, Uncle Gus! I'm sure Mr. Yaggata wouldn't be interested in a silly old commercial transaction like . . ."

Gustin: You see here, Bessie! I'm the one's being interviewed!

Mrs. Kilkau: Of course, Uncle Gus, but . . .

Gustin: And I think that story about the rollit has a real lesson for everyone!

Yaggata: It certainly wouldn't do any harm to hear the story, sir.

Gustin: You understand, mister, we weren't anything but lean chums[3] with the little kit[4]. Our power pack was busy all the time just producing bare essentials. So when old Effus Kilkau advertised that he had a draft animal for sale, pap was all for buying it.

Yaggata: Advertised? How was that done?

Gustin: On the checker net[5]. Old Effus advertised that he had one rollit for sale cheap, weight 2500 kilos, trained to plow.

Yaggata: Some of those who will use this record will not be familiar with the genus rollitus sphericus, Mr. Gustin. Would you mind setting the record clear?

Gustin: In due time, son. Don't light a short fuse. The point is, my pap didn't know a rollit from a bowling ball, either, and he was too darned proud to admit it.

Yaggata: Ha, ha, ha. Wouldn't anyone enlighten him?

Gustin: Well, old Effus suspected pap was ignorant about rollits, and Effus thought it'd be a good joke just to let him have it cold.

Yaggata: I see. How was the transaction completed?

Gustin: All done on the checker net, and confirmed at base where they credited Effus with the seventy galars.

Yaggata: Your father bought it sight unseen?

Gustin: Oh, certainly! There was no question of hanky-panky in those days. People had to help each other . . . and they had to be honest because their lives depended on it. It's only after we get civilized that we feel free to cheat. Besides, we lived so far apart in those days that we'd have lost more going to look at the beast than just having it shipped over.

Yaggata: That certainly makes sense, sir. But didn't your father kind of feel around to find out specifically what it was that he was buying?

Gustin: Oh, he probed around some. But pap was afraid of ap-

[2]Rollit, genus Rollitus Sphericus, exterminated on Gomelsa III in the mutated mastitis epidemic of 6990. One herd may be seen in Galactic zoo, Aspidiske III, although this is the heavy planet adapted form. The original was an ovoid oviparous creature that grew to a size of some twenty meters diameter, moved by shifting balance.

[3]Lean chums—marginal pioneers, poor.

[4]Little kit—minimum pioneer equipment permitted by settlement authorities—clothing suited to local climate (2 changes each); one Hellerite power pack; hand tools fitted for local resources and sufficient to build shelter, work the land.

[5]Checker net—daily radio check-in network required during pioneer period on all planets.

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pearing the sag[6]. I do remember he asked how the rollit was to feed. Old Effus just said that this rollit was trained to a whistle call, and could be turned loose to graze off the country. About then, somebody else chimed in on the net and said 70 galars was certainly cheap for a 2500-kilo rollit, and if pap didn't want the beast, then he'd take it. So pap closed the deal right then and there.

Yaggata: How did they deliver it?

Gustin: Well, the Kilkaus were some better off than we were. They had a freight platform null to 6000 kilos. They just put the rollit on that platform and flew it over.

Yaggata: What did your father say when he saw it?

Gustin: You mean about harness?

Yaggata: Yes.

Gustin: Well, sir, I don't think pap even thought about the harness problem. We'd had a ciget on Procyon, and pap'd made his own harness with good long traces so he could stay away from the stink of it. He just figured he'd have another set of harness to make.

Yaggata: Didn't he say *anything* about harness?

Gustin: No. He didn't have a chance to say anything. You see, the rollit was a little spooky from the flight. As soon as they let it down it rolled all over the landscape, and it made one pass and rolled right over me.

Yaggata: Galumpers! To someone who'd never seen a rollit before, I imagine that was quite frightening!

Gustin: It's a good thing Maw didn't see it. She'd have passed dead away. You know, a 2500-kilo rollit develops about 1500 kilos of forward thrust from a standing start, and once it gets moving it can really roll. They're deceptive, too. They look like a kind of giant amœba flowing over the landscape, and all of a sudden they're right on top of you—literally!

Yaggata: Weren't you frightened when it ran over you?

Gustin: Well, it knocked me down, there was a second of darkness and a kind of warm, firm pressure—then it was gone. You know, a rollit won't hurt you. In fact, they're really very friendly. There was a case of a fellow over in Mirmon County who was saved from a fangbird by his rollit. The rollit just sat on this fellow until the fangbird gave up.

Yaggata: I'll bet that was an experience!

Gustin: Sure was. You know, a rollit's ninety percent mobile fluid and pump muscles, and the rest a hide like flexible armor plate. An adult rollit's practically immune to physical attack—even from a fangbird—and there's nothing like being indestructible to make you a friend of everyone.

Yaggata: What was your reaction

[6]Sag—a fool, stupid person, one easily gulled.

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to being run down by that big animated ball of flesh?

Gustin: After the first shock, I wanted to try it again. I thought it was fun. But pap was so shaken by it, that he rushed me indoors. It took old Effus a half hour to convince pap that a rollit wouldn't hurt anyone, that it distributed its weight over such a large area that it was just like getting a good massage.

Yaggata: Ha, ha, ha. So there was your father with a rollit and no idea how to harness it.

Gustin: That's right. He didn't even think about it until after lunch. Old Effus was gone by then. The rollit was outside just rolling around, browsing off the fritch brush, clearing quite an area of it, at that. Good brush buckers, rollits are.

Yaggata: How did your father approach the problem?

Gustin: He just walked up to the rollit, clucked at it and whistled like old Effus had told him. He led the rollit over to the shed where we had our imperv plow. It was a three-gang plow with a two and a half foot bite.

Yaggata: How was it supposed to be towed?

Gustin: By a power pack rotor. But we only had the one pack, and we didn't want to go into three-ball for a rotor.

Yaggata: What did your father say?

Gustin: He said, "Well, let's figure out how to hook this beast to the front of that there . . ." And then it hit him. How do you put harness on a beast that rolls its whole body, and moves by shifting its center of gravity? That was a real stinker of a problem.

Yaggata: I've seen the diagrams. They appear quite obvious. Didn't it occur to your father right away how it had to be done?

Gustin: Sometimes the obvious isn't so obvious until someone's showed it to you, mister. Remember, pap had never seen anything even remotely like a rollit before. His whole concept of draft animals was tied up in something like a ciget—a creature with a specific number of legs and a body that would accommodate some kind of harness. The rollit was a different breed of beast entirely.

Yaggata: Certanly, but . . .

Gustin: And what you've been used to seeing can tie your mind up in little knots so tight you can't see anything else.

Yaggata: Why didn't your father just call up a neighbor and ask how to hitch a rollit to a plow?

Gustin: Pap was too proud. He wasn't going to ask and look foolish, and he wasn't going to give up. For about a week it was a regular ten-ring scrag fight around our compound. We learned later that old Effus and half his clan were up in the hills with binoculars laughing themselves silly. They ran bets on what we'd try next.

Yaggata: What'd you try *first?*

Gustin: Just a plain loop harness. Pap made a loop big enough to pass

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around the rollit. He clucked the beast into the loop, dropped the bight around near the top front—that is, around the end away from the plow. A rollit doesn't rightly have a front. Then he ordered the beast to pull. That rollit leaned into the line like it knew what it was doing. The plow moved forward about four feet, then the line was down where it slipped under the beast. Pap clucked it back into the harness and ordered it forward again. About three times that way and it was clear he'd never get his plowing done if he had to reharness every four feet.

Yaggata: Were your neighbors watching all this?

Gustin: Yes. By the second day the whole district was in on the joke. And we had a full flap in our compound and were really hupping it.

Yaggata: What'd he try next?

Gustin: A kind of web harness with rollers. It took us three days to make it. Meanwhile, we tried a vertical harness that went over the top and under the rollit. We greased the area that contacted the rollit, but the grease wouldn't last. As soon as it was gone, the harness would rub. Our rollit could rub through the toughest harness in about ten revolutions.

Yaggata: How'd the web harness work?

Gustin: It really wasn't a bad idea—better than what our neighbors were using right then if he'd perfected it.

Yaggata: What were your neighbors using?

Gustin: A kind of corral on wheels with rollers along the front to contact the front of the rollit. It had harness rings on the back. They opened one side to let the rollit in, hooked on the equipment, and the rollit pulled the whole rig.

Yaggata: I'm curious. Why didn't your father sneak over and watch his neighbors using their rollits?

Gustin: He tried. But they were all onto him. Our neighbors were just never using their beasts when pap came around. It was like a comic formal dance. They'd invite him in for a drink of chicker. Pap would remark about their plowing. He'd ask to look over their equipment, but there'd never be anything around that even remotely resembled rollit harness.

Yaggata: Uh . . . what was wrong with the web harness he tried?

Gustin: Pap hadn't made the web big enough to belly completely around the front of the rollit. And then the rollers kept fouling because he hadn't perfected a good sling system.

Yaggata: How did he finally solve the problem?

Gustin: He calmed down and started thinking straight. First, he put the plow out in the center of our compound. Then he stationed the rollit all around the plow, first one side then the other. And just like that—he had it.

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Yaggata: I must be a little slow on obvious associations myself. Something has just occurred to me. Was your father the inventor of the standard rollitor?

Gustin: It was his idea.

Mrs. Kilkau: Uncle Gus! You never told us your father was an inventor! I never realized . . .

Gustin: He wasn't an inventor. He was just a darned good practical pioneer. As far as thinking up the original rollitor is concerned, that'd be obvious to anyone who'd given it a second's thought. What do you think the Gomeisa Historical Society has been trying to . . .

Mrs. Kilkau: Do you mean that musty old junk out in the number two warehouse?

Gustin: That *musty old junk* includes your mother's first swamp cream tritchet![7] And right spang in the middle of that *musty old junk* is the first rollitor!

Yaggata: Do you mean you have the original rollitor right here?

Gustin: Right out back in the warehouse.

Yaggata: Why . . . that thing's priceless! Could we go out and see it now?

Gustin: Don't see why not.

Mrs. Kilkau: Oh, Uncle Gus! It's so dirty out there and . . .

Gustin: A little dirt never hurt anyone, Bessie! Uhhhgh! That knee where the fangbird got me is giving me more trouble this week. Too bad we don't have any rollits around nowadays. There's nothing like a rollit massage to pep up the circulation.

Yaggata: Have *you* had an encounter with a fangbird?

Gustin: Oh, sure. A couple of times.

Yaggata: Could you tell us about it?

Gustin: Later, son. Let's go look at the rollitor.

(Editor: A raw splice break has been left on the wire at this point and should be repaired.)

Yaggata: Here we are in a corner of warehouse number two. Those stacked boxes you see in the background are cases of swamp cream so important to the cosmetic industry—and the chief output of the Gustin-Kilkau Ranch.

Gustin: This here's a trench climber used for mining the raw copper we discovered in the fumerole region.

Yaggata: And this must be the original rollitor attached to this plow.

Gustin: That's right. It's a simple thing rightly enough: just four wooden rollers set in two 'V's', one set of rollers above the other, and the whole rig attached directly to the plow at the rear.

Yaggata: They're quite large rollers.

Gustin: We had a big rollit. You see this ratchet thing in here?

Yaggata: Yes.

Gustin: That adjusted the height

[7]Swamp cream tritchet—the crude baffled incline first used to settle out the floating curds secreted by calophyllum gomeisum, the common swamp bush of Gomeisa III.

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of the rollers and the distance between the two sets to fit the frontal curve of our rollit. The rollit just moved up against these rollers. One set of rollers rode high on the beast's frontal curve, and the other set of rollers rode low. The rollit kind of wedged in between them and pushed.

Yaggata: What are these wheels on the plow frame?

Gustin: They kept the plow riding level.

Yaggata: It's really such a simple device.

Gustin: Simple! We trained our rollit to plow all by itself!

Yaggata: What'd your neighbors think of that?

Gustin: I'll tell you they stopped laughing at pap! Inside of a forty-day, the old tow corrals were all discarded. They called the new rigs Gustin rollitors for awhile, but the name soon got shortened.

Mrs. Kilkau: I never realized! To think! Right here in our own warehouse! Why . . . the Historical Society . . .

Gustin: They can wait until I've passed on! I get a deal of satisfaction coming out here occasionally and just touching this *musty old junk*. It does you good to remember where you came from.

Mrs. Kilkau: But, Uncle Gus . . .

Gustin: And you came from dirt-farming pioneers, Bessie! Fine people! There wouldn't be any of this soft living you enjoy today if it weren't for them and this *musty old junk!*

Mrs. Kilkau: But I think it's selfish of you, keeping these *priceless* . . .

Gustin: Sure it's selfish! But that's a privilege of those who've done their jobs well, and lived long enough to look back awhile. If you'll consider a minute, gal, I'm the one who saw what swamp cream did for the complexion. I've got a right to be selfish!

Mrs. Kilkau: Yes, Uncle Gus. I've heard that story.

Yaggata: But *we* haven't heard it, Mr. Gustin. Would you care to . . .

Gustin: Yes, I'd care to . . . but some other time, son. Right now I'm a wicky tired, and I'd better get some rest.

Yaggata: Certainly, sir! Shall we set the time for . . .

Gustin: I'll call you son. Don't you call me. Uuuuugh! Damned fangbird wound! But I'll tell you one thing, son: I've changed my mind about this frip-frap of yours. It does us all good to see where we came from. If the people who see that record of yours have any brains, they'll think about where they came from. Do 'em good!

(*Editor: Wire ends here. Attached note says Hilmot Gustin taken ill the following day. The second interview was delayed indefinitly.)*

Senator Zolam: Do you have further records to introduce at this time, Mr. Secretary?

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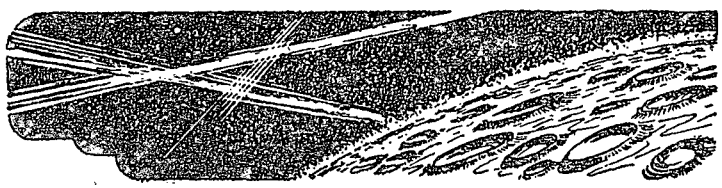
Secretary Hablar: I was hoping my Assistant Secretary for Cultural Affairs could make it here today. Unfortunately, he was called to an intercultural function with representatives of the Ring Planets.

Saboteur McKie: That was my doing, Mr. Secretary. The committee members are pressed for time today.

Secretary Hablar: I see.

Senator Zolam: There being no further business, the Special Subcommittee on Intergalactic Culture stands adjourned until 1600 tomorrow.



36 HOURS TO THE MOON?

BY THE TIME you read this, we may have sent a rocket to the moon.

The outward flight of this rocket, expected (as we go to press) to circle and not involve an actual impact, will take two-and-a-half to three days, but Dr. Wernher von Braun, of the Army's Ballistic Missile Agency, is quoted as saying that a trip to the moon *could* vary in duration from one-and-a-half to three-and-a-half days. He felt the latter would be "slow" . . . .

Respecting the feeling of scientists that radioactive contamination resulting from a nuclear explosion, or chemical contamination from a chemical blast, might seriously cripple later scientific studies of the moon, it has apparently been decided that the three-stage rocket will be aimed not directly at the moon but to one side of it. Arriving within the moon's gravitational field, the rocket will be pulled around the moon and then start back to the Earth—it's to be hoped.

It will photograph the dark side—the unknown side—of the moon (and perhaps clarify the question of whether the Planet Clarion exists), the photographs being transmitted electronically to the Earth. The rocket itself will be drawn back into the Earth's gravitational field and be consumed in the heat caused by friction with the Earth's atmosphere.

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acre in the sky

by . . . Robert F. Young

He used to look at her in a different way—in the days before the ship came. But now he turned his head away.

THE ship stood in the tril field, waiting.

She seemed taller than ever, Derth thought. It was as though she had grown during the night. He came out of the house and sat down on the steps, filling his eyes with her machined loveliness, her burnished beauty.

The morning wind, laden with the fragrance of canth blossoms, tiptoed down from the hills and touched his nostrils, but he was unaware of it. A kiddar hawk dropped out of the cobalt sky and soared over the changeless fields, but he did not see it.

His eyes caressed each contour of the tall, proud ship. A *Starmaid,* he thought dreamily. A *Starmaid De Luxe.* He still found it hard to believe that she was all his, from the tip of her haughty nose to the metallic soles of her wide, but graceful, landing feet.

Presently he became aware of Lorrie standing in the doorway behind him. He did not turn. He did not need to. He could see her large, sad eyes in her thin face without turning. He could see her gawky girl's body overburdened with child, the shapeless maternity dress

There is a quiet sensitivity to the work of Robert F. Young, which is reflected in vignettes such as this—describing the emotions of the man, waiting for the moment when he may, finally, leave for the stars. Mr. Young, who lives in upstate New York, has been a frequent contributor to F. U.

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that enshrouded the bloated remnants of her loveliness.

He heard her listless voice: "Shall I fix you something to eat, Derth?"

He did not take his eyes from the ship. "No. Not yet."

"But you didn't eat no breakfast and it's almost time for dinner. Ain't you hungry?"

"No, not hungry at all," he said. Then: "You get any pains yet?"

"Not yet, Derth. I expect to soon, though."

"*How* soon?"

"Just soon. I can't tell, you know that."

He was silent. He sat there motionless, his eyes clinging to the ship. After a while he heard Lorrie move away from the door and back into the house. His eyes fell away from the ship then, dropped to the sandy soil at his feet—the soil he had fought for years, forcing it to yield huge harvests in spite of itself; fighting it, wheedling it, humoring it so that some day he might escape from it. And now that the day had come, he sat chained to his doorstep, while the splendid ship the harvests had bought stood imprisoned in the light of a single sun.

It was unbearable. He got up and walked over to the equipment shed, paused apathetically in the doorway. The auto-tractor and the cultivator and the picker stood in the gloom, gathering dust while they awaited their new master. The phosphorescent webs of arachnids shimmered in dark corners, hung on invisible filaments from the rafters. He turned away.

He heard the stuttering sound of a creeper, watched while the big wheeled vehicle turned from the highway into the sandy drive. Fenwich, he thought. He waited till the huge machine came to a halt, then walked over to where his neighbor was leaning out of the cab.

"Thought I'd stop by for a few words," Fenwich said. "On my way to the Commissary."

"Glad you did," Derth said.

"Guess you'll be leaving soon."

"Soon's we can."

"How's it feel to own a ship, Derth?"

Derth shifted his feet. "Feels all right," he said.

"I saw her when I came up the road. Couldn't take my eyes off her. Going to get one just like her, next harvest. How long'd you have to wait, Derth?"

"No time at all. They flew her direct from Earth to Goth. Set her down right in my backyard."

"And she can take you right up to the stars!" Fenwich shook his head. "It's kind of hard to believe. Are the stars very far, Derth?"

"Not for *her*. She travels in under space."

"How can she go in *under* it?"

"She just can, that's all I know. It says so in the book. You press the green button and under you go, and when you come up again, there's the star you picked on the picture."

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"As easy as that!"

"Nothing to it. And every star in the picture has at least one dirt planet. Press another button and you land right on it."

"Which star you going to?"

"Don't know yet. There's hundreds of them open for settlers. Maybe I'll look them all over—if Lorrie ever has her baby."

"Can't leave till she does, huh?"

"The Needle says the 'celeration would kill her."

Fenwich wagged his head. "Too bad," he said. "Too bad. And the ship sitting there, wasting, kind of . . . Well, got to make the Commissary 'fore night." He depressed the reverse button. "See you, Derth. Maybe see you on the new acre. When I get *my* ship."

The creeper backed slowly across the yard. Derth watched it climb back onto the highway and move ponderously away beneath the cobalt vastness of the sky. When it was out of sight, he watched the empty road, standing listlessly in the dusty yard, his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his tril overalls.

That was all there was to do. Watch. The ship was bought and paid for, loaded and ready to go. And all he could do was stand in the sun and watch. And wait for Lorrie.

He kicked the dust with the toe of his field boot. The ship had come a whole week ago and he was sick and tired of waiting. Lorrie *must* be overdue, no matter what the Needle said. Why, she was as big as a milch bront—anybody could see that. How much bigger could she get? How much uglier?

He kicked the dust again, then turned abruptly and started across the fields. His feet sank into the sandy loam, making each step an ordeal, but he persisted. Anything was preferable to sitting around the house for another monotonous day.

Before him, a ruffle of canth-clad hills briefly interrupted the monotony of the landscape. They were little more than dunes, actually: wind-piled remnants of the desert days before man had come with his scrapers and diggers and engineering ingenuity and joined the antipodal seas with a vast network of irrigation ditches. When he reached the nearest one, Derth climbed halfway up its verdant slope and sank down to rest.

The heavy perfume of burgeoning canth was all around him. It cloyed his nostrils, making him giddy. He lay back amid the green vines and the blue blossoms, pillowing his head upon his clasped hands.

He looked back across the fields at the ship.

The sun had caught her completely and she stood against the sky like a lithe goddess in a gleaming golden gown. Derth gasped involuntarily, struggling with his new perspective. He had never seen her quite like this before—so poised, so exquisite, so alive with light. Up

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till now, he had always been close to her. Ever since the day she'd arrived, he'd never wandered far from her side. Too, there was a certain intimacy connected with polishing her flanks, with inspecting, over and over, the complex interior of her body: an intimacy that had made it impossible for him to see her in quite the same way as he saw her now.

The cobalt sky seemed deeper than ever, the sun warmer. He lay lazily in the canth, eyes half closed. The afternoon dreamed slowly by . . .

The hills had acquired long shadows when he started back. There was a strange lightness about his body, and his legs no longer minded the softness of the fields. When he came to the ship (she wore a coppery gown now), he paused beside her, staring up at her towering, magnificent body. He reached out to touch the hem of her gown—

"Derth!"

The illusion disintegrated. His hand dropped to his side.

"Derth!"

He turned toward the house. His cheeks were burning. Lorrie was standing on the steps, thin, grotesque, misshapen. Sudden hatred suffused him. "What you want!" he shouted.

"It's time for supper . . . Derth, I've called you three times. What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing!" He started toward the house, stomping his feet hard.

Lorrie had reentered the kitchen and was standing by the stove. "I got some openeye brewed," she said. "Are you hungry yet, Derth?"

He dropped his eyes. "Not hungry at all," he said.

"What's the matter with you, Derth? You sick? You never eat no more—"

"When a man don't work he just don't get hungry." Derth sat down at the table and took the cup of openeye she handed him. He stirred it absently, staring into its liquid blackness.

Lorrie sat down opposite him. "Derth, why don't you look at me no more?"

Startled, he raised his eyes. He could feel his cheeks burning again. She was regarding him intently and his eyes wanted to run away. It was all he could do to keep them on her face.

"Am I ugly now, Derth?"

"Course not, Lorrie!"

"You used to look at me—before the ship came. At least you looked at me a little bit. Now you don't look at me at all."

"Lorrie, I got lots on my mind. I don't have *time* to look at you as much as I used to."

"But you're not working. You just sit around all day and mope and brood and—"

"I'm thinking, Lorrie! Thinking . . ." He was talking desperately. Somehow he couldn't stand to see her cry. "Thinking of that acre we're going to find up in the stars. Why, it'll have dirt so rich

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our tril will grow as high as clouds. We'll build a house with two sleeping rooms, maybe even *three*. And there won't be no snooping Needle coming around every week, jabbing us in the arm and making us take fever pills. Just think of that, Lorrie!"

Her eyes were clearing, though minute particles of moisture glistened among the lashes. "I guess it *will* be wonderful, won't it," she said wistfully.

"Wonderful! I guess so! And we'll have a special piece of ground where we'll keep the ship. Right next to the house, maybe. And she'll be standing there waiting, waiting to take us wherever we want to go, whenever we want to go. Standing there, tall and fine and shining—"

"But I thought that after we got to where we're going we were going to sell her."

"*Sell* her!" Derth stood up. He crashed his fist hard on the table. "You crazy, Lorrie? Why I'd never think of selling her. I—"

"But Derth, you said before you bought her you were going to sell her to help outfit the new acre!"

"Lorrie, I never did!"

"Yes, you did, Derth."

"I must have been crazy then. Stark crazy! Now what are you crying for!"

"I—I don't know, Derth. I'm—I'm scared of something. Something I don't understand."

He sat there, sickened. The tears made straggly streaks on her pinched face. Her thin shoulders shook. After a while he forced himself to get up and walk around the table. He touched her hair. "Don't cry, Lorrie," he said. "There's nothing to cry about."

"I can't help it. Something's happened to you, Derth."

"Nothing's happened to me, Lorrie." He patted her shoulder, recoiled inwardly from its boniness.

"You don't love me no more. There's somebody else."

"But how *could* there be anyone else? There isn't anyone else around. Not for miles and miles and miles."

"Sometimes I hear you get up in the night and walk around, and then I hear you go outside. Sometimes I think you're never coming back to bed. Where do you go, Derth?"

He felt the sudden hotness of his face. It was difficult for him to speak, to go on pretending. He had waited too long, that was the trouble. He never should have waited in the first place. Presently: "I keep thinking of the new acre," he said. "Like I told you. Sometimes I get thinking so hard I can't sleep and I have to get up and walk around, and go outside and sit on the steps. What's wrong with that? What's wrong with that, Lorrie?"

She did not answer, but her shoulders slowly quieted.

"You're all nerved up 'cause of the baby," he went on quickly.

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"Soon's you have it, we'll find our new acre and stake it out and everything'll be fine. Fine as tril."

"Do you think so, Derth?"

"I know so! Come on now, let's go to bed."

He helped her up, trying not to notice her awkward body, trying not to see her tear-stained face. But it wasn't any good.

He knew, suddenly, that he was not going to wait any longer.

He lay on his back without moving. He lay there for a long time. It grew dark in the room, then, after a while, it grew light again, as Goth's huge moon edged above the horizon.

Lorrie was a dim mound beside him, emitting soft breathing sounds. He was careful not to move till the breathing sounds became deep and even, and then, when he finally did move, he moved surreptitiously, slipping from beneath the covers and dressing in the pale darkness. He packed his things silently, then felt his way from the room. When he opened the kitchen door, a shower of silver rain engulfed him.

He stood on the steps, breathless.

He could see her clearly in the unreasonable light. She was wearing a silver gown. She was tall and clean-cut, lithe, graceful, magnificent; a bewitching goddess of stars, standing in the moonlight, waiting—

Waiting to abscond with him.

He ran toward her across the fields, arms outstretched.

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a new article by *Lester del Rey*

OH, SAY, CAN YOU SEE —
an unpublished Gavagan's Bar story
by *L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt*

THE ENLIGHTENED ONES —
a new novelet by *Edmund Cooper*

MEET THE NON-TERRESTRIAL —
a new article by *Ivan T. Sanderson*

THE DIAMOND IMAGES —
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THE ROBOTS STRIKE —
a new story by *Harry Harrison*

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seed of violence

by . . . Jay Williams

What he held could mean the difference between life and death for a planet. The Traditionalists were desperate.

WHEN Nick Egon boarded the Interplanetary Liner P-44, he had only two thoughts in his head: first, to see his precious case safely stowed away, and second to go to sleep at once. When the box, containing the results of ten days' exhaustive excavation in the lunar pit had been deposited in the hold, and the third officer had shown him to compartment two, he sank back against the cushions with just strength enough left to mumble, "Don't wake me." He had a glimpse of an inquisitive face, pale and flabby, watching him from the seat opposite; then he plunged into a deep, dreamless sleep.

He awoke slowly and luxuriously. The cabin was empty, his cabinmate was probably in the lounge. Egon lay back, eyes half shut, too comfortable even to bring himself out of the embrace of the seat.

It had been a rewarding expedition. The chamber, deep-buried in the sand, was clearly made by the same hands as those which had built the cromlechs of Mars. There were glyphs similar to those of Morna desert, and one character—ah, that was worth the work and

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effort. He remembered the surprise of the men at Lunar Station: "Is that all you've got to show for ten days of digging?" one of them had said. "I can get more than that out of my back teeth." Yes, but that glyph, thanks to the carving above it, could be read and interpreted. He smiled with contentment and hugged to himself a specialist's secret delight. Eight thousand *emmas* was what that single glyph had cost.

His own face, lined and unshaven, grinned back at him from the opaque luxite of the corridor wall, rather lean and worn and a little gray at the temples, for they paid scant attention to vita treatments at Morna Study Center. His deep-set thoughtful eyes gave him a mild and pedantic look, but there were hints of stubbornness and determination unsuspected even by himself in the firm lips and solid, stubborn jaw. Rubbing the bristles on that jaw, he unpacked his kit and set about freshening up.

The intercom lighted and the third officer's voice said, softly, "Dinner in the lounge in thirty minutes. We bring you the latest news reports from Earth. Crowds rioted today outside the Bloater Pharmaceutical Building, in Chicago, in protest against the dismissal for indecency of Jazzer Clatch, thrumming idol of the solids . . . Controversy continues over the use of parabenzylopium in cigarettes, as Conclaveman Mahoud warned against . . . Here is a bulletin from the very chambers of the Central Interplanetary Council themselves: Councilman Gole, member of the Traditionalist Party and one of the Venus reps, urged once again that powers of the Martian Guardians be limited according to the terms of the bill introduced by . . ."

Egon reached out lazily. For emergency reasons, the set could not be turned off completely, but he reduced the volume so that the voice was a mere whisper. What a strange world, he thought. Everywhere but on Mars was there implicit the threat of violence: riots over thrumming idols, danger in cigarettes, threats in the Council itself. True, there was peace for the first time in human history, a peace that had lasted almost three generations, but there was a restlessness in men that would not let them enjoy this peace. Except for the Study Centers, where work was all-absorbing.

He wiped the last of the wash-and-shave lotion from his face and tossed the towel in the disposal chute. The handle of the compartment door turned, and a man entered.

It was his cabin-mate, the man with the pale face. He walked with an apologetic stoop that reduced his height, and he bore his large, oddly soft face thrust out before him like a visiting card. His complexion had the bleached quality which seemed to betoken a Venusian, a man who had spent his life

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in the clouded light of the bubble settlements. He came in hesitantly, then seeing that Egon was awake let his breath out in a sigh, and smiled. His smile had an unwholesome quality in that bloated face, rather like the breaking apart of an overripe cheese.

"Hope I wasn't responsible for waking you?" he said, sliding into his seat.

"Not at all," Egon replied politely.

"You gave orders not to be disturbed. You've been asleep almost fourteen hours." There was a hint of question in his voice.

"I'm an archaeologist," Egon explained, clasping his shirt. "Been doing some digging on The Moon. I had only ten days, and we still have to do most of it by hand. Had to keep at it pretty steadily, on happy pills and wideawakes."

"Ah—an archaeologist. And you're from one of the Martian Study Centers?"

"Morna Desert."

The other leaned back. The flabby face had taken on a curious air of attention. "Please forgive me," he said. "I had forgotten to introduce myself. Lon Faxon."

"Glad to know you. My name's Nick Egon."

"I'm an engineer," Faxon said. "Brussels. Matter of fact, I'm going to Mars myself for a couple of weeks. Been called to make some tests on a new synthetic they've developed at Tanggra."

Egon glanced at him. From Brussels? With that complexion? Brussels was a city of museums, parks, and amusement centers, and its inhabitants were notoriously burned brown. Then he shrugged. It was no affair of his.

Faxon caught the glance. "I do a good deal of subterranean work," he explained.

"I see."

"Yes. Well, I'll be kept pretty close to the grindstone, at Tanggra, and I wonder—mm—I wonder if you know a Professor named Thorp, at Morna?"

"Of course. Allen Thorp. In the Chemistry Department."

"That's right, that's the one. Good old Allen. We were close friends once, a few years ago. Then we had a kind of disagreement and broke off. How is he?"

"Why, I imagine he's well," Egon said cautiously. "We're not exactly chin-chums."

"I wonder if you'd mind doing me a small favor," the engineer said. "You see, Allen is godfather to my son. He hasn't seen the boy for five years. I was going to mail this picture to him, but since you know him and are going to the same place, I wonder if you'd mind giving it to him when you see him?"

As he spoke, Faxon brought from an inner pocket a wallet and drew from it a small, flat photograph of the sort many people preferred to carry instead of stereos. He handed it to Egon with another of his Gorgonzola smiles. Egon

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took it with some embarrassment. It was a picture of a sturdy, rosy child of six or seven, dressed in the uniform of a Space Scout Junior.

"I'll be at the other end of the planet, you know," said Faxon. "I'd be most grateful."

"Well, I—" Egon could find no graceful way of refusing what was, after all, a slight act of courtesy. "I'll be glad to," he said.

"Splendid! You're sure you won't forget? You'll make a point of it?"

"We Marsmen are very careful of our promises," Egon said, a little stiffly, "no matter how others feel about obligations."

"Of course. No offense, Friend. I am grateful. And would you just tell Allen that I send him all the best, and I'll be at Tanggra until the tenth May, Earth time. He can work out the Martian equivalent, I suppose."

Egon jotted it down on the back of the picture in his neat, precise handwriting: 10 May ET, and slipped the photo into his own wallet.

"It's nearly dinnertime," he said. "I think I'll stroll down to the lounge. Fourteen hours, I think you said? I hope there's plenty of food on board. Are you coming?"

Faxon's expression changed subtly. If it were possible, he seemed to grow a little whiter. "No," he said. "I'm—I'm too tired. I'll just rest a while."

Out in the corridor, Egon found himself regretting that he had accepted the errand. Not that he had any intention of changing his mind: the normal, well-adjusted citizen was not given to antisocial acts. But there was something unpleasant, even a little false, about the obsequious engineer, although it was hard to believe that a responsible man in a scientific profession would lie about himself. Still, there was a jarring quality in him, something Egon with his Study Center upbringing did not quite know how to meet. He shrugged, and strode down the narrow passageway.

Like all planetary liners of the day, the P-44 was built for utility rather than comfort, over four-fifths of her space being given to fuel storage and cargo. Passengers, limited to a maximum of eight, had to have special priority for travel, and divided their time between their tiny compartments and the lounge. Even at that, it was not unusual for dinner to be taken among piles of crates or metal containers.

When Egon entered, there were half a dozen people already at the long table. Dominating all the rest was an elderly man with a mop of brilliant white hair and a lively, angry way of talking. Even Egon knew him from the newspapers: he was Councilman Ralph Ackroyd, one of the leaders and certainly the most vocal member of the Traditionalist Party. With him were two male secretaries who followed him everywhere; they were called, by newsmen, Pat and Mike, after two

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characters in an ancient fable. Their real names were Donaldson and Tucker.

Of the other passengers, two were members of the Archon Study Center. The sixth was obviously on government business, for on the table before him, next to an essence inhalator, lay a dispatch case with the diplomatic seal of the North American Conclaves emblazoned on its lock. He was hollow-cheeked and haggard, a silent type on whom a rich, dark jacket with jeweled clips hung like a scarecrow's rags. As Egon entered, the man raised his head and flashed a look at the archaeologist from enormous, startlingly brilliant eyes. Then, without a word, he rose abruptly and disappeared into the corridor.

Egon buzzed for the third officer and ordered dinner. One of the women from Archon knew him slightly, and she and her companion made room for him. They could not speak much, however, for Councilman Ackroyd's booming voice monopolized the conversation. He was going to Mars, it appeared, to make a personal tour of investigation.

"Slackness in high places," he said. "Confusion masked by paper work. . . . Trouble with you Study Center chaps is, you're dreamers. Dreamers are never the doers. No notion of the demands of progress. . . . Going to have a crack at the books myself."

And so on. Egon was mildly aware that he had heard it all before, but he wasn't at all sure he knew what it meant. He ate well, however, and tried to talk softly to the women on either side of him.

After dinner, the third officer stamped his ration check and said, "I'm sorry to bother you, Friend, but you fell asleep before I could get you to sign the unloading manifest for your case. Could you go back to the fourth officer and do that now?"

Egon nodded. He arranged to meet the Archon women for a game of minigolf later in the day, and made his way down the passage towards the last compartment.

As he passed the door of his own cabin, he heard voices coming from inside. The tones were low but tense, and one voice sounded menacing. Egon stopped for a moment.

He heard: "Don't know? Try again." It was a light, pleasant tenor voice.

"No!" came quite loudly. That was Faxon.

Egon caught himself with a start. He was actually eavesdropping, a thoroughly antisocial act for a Marsman. Ten days away, and he was already infected with the coarser air of outside. He went hastily on his way.

His business with the fourth officer was soon settled. He took the receipt back to his cabin, and before entering listened for a moment at the door lest he intrude. There was no sound. Whoever Faxon's visitor had been (and it was a kind of prying even to speculate on that)

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he must have gone. Egon pushed the door open.

For an instant, he thought his eyes must be playing tricks on him. Faxon seemed to be trying to crawl across the floor from his own seat to Egon's. Then he saw that no one could possibly crawl with his head turned completely over his shoulder. The engineer was quite dead.

Egon leaned against the door frame, holding his stomach down with an effort. He had never before seen violent, naked death. Aside from the rare, almost petrified mummies his researches sometimes brought him, the only form of death he had ever beheld had been the handful of calcined ash in the neatly-packaged plastic containers of the Public Crematorium.

Faxon was not a nice sight, in any case. His feet were tucked jauntily up on his seat; his body lay folded in the narrow floor space, his chest and shoulders on Egon's seat. His head was turned at an impossible angle so that his sightless eyes glared at the ceiling. The floor was littered with papers and personal belongings from a small case that lay on the seat.

Egon's nausea lasted only a moment. Then his social sense reasserted itself and he rang for the third officer.

When the body had been removed to the ship's freezer and the dead man's papers and belongings had been tagged by the third officer, who was also a doctor, Egon sank into his seat again and tried to pull himself together. The third officer had been efficient and positive: Faxon must have been reaching up to the rack for his case, he said, and had lost his balance and toppled backward, slamming his head against Egon's seat at just the proper angle to snap the spine. Government files would establish identity and survivors, and Civil Investigation would establish accidental death. He was sorry for the unpleasantness, he said, but it was the kind of thing that happened; here today and gone tomorrow, he said, with a sententious sniff; in any case there was nothing they could do about it, and it would turn out to be a blessing, on the whole, for Egon, who would have some privacy which no one else on the ship had.

But Egon took little comfort from this. He remembered the ragdoll sprawl of Faxon's body. He thought of Faxon's head resting on this very seat, and of the man's fawning smile, and how he had spoken and looked only a short time before. "Notify the survivors"—there was something so brutal and final in the phrase. To the third officer it was only an occurrence en route, but to a wife and children somewhere it was tragedy and tears. . . .

He came to himself with a start. The photo of Faxon's son! He had completely forgotten about it. Perhaps he ought to turn it over to the

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third officer. But it was a personal errand, after all, and one which now more than ever ought to be carried out. He would have something else to tell Professor Thorp. Faxon would not be at Tanggra after all.

He settled himself in his seat and took out the little copy of Suetonius with which he always traveled. He unsnapped the cover, adjusted the lens, and pressed the tiny button which turned the pages. But he could not read. His hands still trembled and he felt horribly restless. He recalled that he had a date to play minigolf, but the way he felt he'd never be able to control the small spring of the game. In the end, he rang for the third officer again and when the man appeared, he said, "Bring me a bottle of whiskey, please. And three beta-complex chasers." He didn't like getting drunk in solitude, but the situation seemed to call for oblivion.

He was better by the next day, and somehow the days passed; the Moon receded and bore the memory of Faxon with it. He spent most of his time in the company of the two women from Archon. One was a geologist, the other a biophysicist, and they were both unattached and uninhibited, so that he was able to keep himself occupied both day and night, with good conversation, games of multiple chess and the like, and a certain amount of erotic play.

Even Councilman Ackroyd and his assistants settled into the routine of the voyage and became fellow-passengers, for not even an Opposition Councilman could hold to nothing but politics during the long weeks of a space jump. Donaldson and Tucker were lively and amusing, and Ackroyd turned out to have an enormous fund of jokes, stories about his checkered past and his political associates, and shrewd observations on life in general. Only on one occasion was there anything approaching a wrangle.

This was after dinner, one ship-time evening. Donaldson and Tucker were playing a gambling game in one corner of the lounge. The diplomatic courier whose name was either Ratchet or Hatchet—Egon was not quite certain which, for the man kept to himself, rarely spoke to anyone, and when he did speak mumbled his words—was watching a tape of an opera with earphones plugged in so as not to disturb anyone else. The two women and Egon were at the long table with Ackroyd, playing a word game called *Pic* which had become a new fad.

Egon had just changed "guardian" into "Martian," added "dug" and was wondering what to do with an "A." Ackroyd grunted. "Martian-guardian. It's an obsession with you S-C fellers."

"No, sir," Egon said, smiling. "Students can't afford to be obsessed, except by a desire to learn. We try to keep open minds about

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everything, even the Opposition."

"Ought to take a leaf from the Venus colony's book," said Ackroyd brusquely. "No studying there. They've just dug in and turned the planet to some account."

"There is no life on Venus except our own," Egon replied.

"Life? Don't talk rubbish, my lad. What's life got to do with it? There's only one kind of life that counts, and it's humanity. Humanity's role is to expand, to spread out, to use the planets which God has placed up there for us. All that sentimental claptrap about life only hinders progress."

"The two situations are quite different," Egon said, patiently. "Venus is nothing but a barren chunk of mud and minerals. The colonists there lived—and still live—in protected domes. But Mars is a world, inhabited by intelligent beings. We began by studying it, trying to live peacefully side by side with the Martians—and that isn't hard, for they haven't even a word for 'quarrel' in their language. We're still studying it. Anyway, there is a certain amount of export, you know."

"A certain amount? Controlled by the Guardians. And tied up with legalities and red tape. I'm out to cut the red tape, my lad. Not for the sake of a few thousand students (although you do your job) but for all of us, every blessed mother's son toiling in the factories and laboratories of our beloved Mother Earth."

Now, Egon thought to himself, he has left the realm of logical discussion and entered Oratory Land. No further exchange of ideas is possible. And with a friendly grin, he said aloud, "Please let's not break up the game, Councilman, over a disagreement as fundamental as this. I'll change my present lay to 'man' and 'tiara'; that ought to avoid irritation."

Ackroyd coughed and chuckled. "Very well. But once we're off this ship, I hope you'll come and visit me and continue the argument. I want you to know I'm always accessible, my boy. Not like Councilman Wladek, believe me. Why, I remember once . . ."

The moment came, at last, when they entered the atmosphere of Mars. Egon emerged from the drugged stupor in which he had endured deceleration, and unsnapped his safety web. The P-44 was being warped into her moorings amid a cloud of siren hoots and loud-speaker commands. He got down his bag and hurried to join the line of passengers waiting to leave the ship. As he stood with the others at the air lock, a voice behind him said softly, "You're from Morna Study Center, aren't you?"

It was the diplomatic courier, Hatchet—or Ratchet. This was almost the first time he had spoken directly to Egon, except to say "Please pass the salt," or "Do you mind if I play this tape?" He was evidently one of those busy diplo-

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matic types who whirled about the planets with messages from office to office, full of secrets, reticent and knowledgeable.

"Yes, I am," Egon said.

"Going to stay in Mars Station?"

"I don't intend to. But then, I really don't know."

"Don't know?"

"There may be some questions. My cabin-mate was killed early in the voyage, you know."

"Ah, yes, of course."

They had no more time for conversation. The ports were opening, and a rumbling vibration underfoot told of cargo being unloaded. It was not until he had collected his luggage and seen his precious box safely transferred to the depot that a tiny nagging memory in Egon's mind came to life. Somewhere, he had heard that voice speak the identical phrase: "Don't know?" Now it came to him. It had been in his own cabin, behind the closed door, just before Faxon was killed.

The realization puzzled rather than shocked him. After all, it was not unlikely that a busy engineer might encounter a busy courier in the course of one trip or another. But why not speak up? Why had he given no indication that he knew Faxon? Perhaps, Egon told himself, that was the essence of the diplomatic service—to be diplomatic.

He had other things to think of, very soon. He was interviewed by a discreet, bald member of Mars C/I, who asked if he would be obliging enough to remain in Mars Station for the next twenty-four hours until information on Faxon came from Earth, and an inquest could be held. It would be only a slight inconvenience to him, and naturally the government would pay all expenses.

Reluctantly, for he was anxious to get back to work, he agreed. He had his case shipped to Morna, said good-bye to the women from Archon Study Center and exchanged addresses with them, and took a public slide to the center of the city.

Mars Station was to all appearance an immense and busy building, a hundred stories high and two or three miles in diameter. Within, it was a network of carefully planned streets and squares, parks, shops, apartments, laboratories, and office units, all radiating from the center of the building, an enormous domed park, on the fiftieth story. In the painted and filigreed lobby of the Hotel Lowell, Egon was only slightly surprised to see the diplomatic courier from Earth registering at the desk. With a nod to the man, he followed him, gave his name and address to the clerk, and impressed his thumb-print on the registration form. He dropped his bag in the desk chute, whence it would be shunted to his room, ordered a light supper to be sent up to him, and went off to the hotel's conditioner for a few minutes of anti-strain exercises.

A plunge in the salt pool, fol-

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lowed by a change of clothing and a quiet supper in his room, left him pleasantly relaxed. He glanced at the time. Not quite twenty-one. He had time for a stroll in the park, and then bed.

The night lights were lit and the trees and shrubbery cast fantastic shadows in their glow. Now and again a couple passed him, arms twined about each other's waist. Fifty stories above him the artificial sky twinkled with stars and a crescent moon. An air of peace, of dreaminess, descended upon Egon as he rambled. In the pleasantest of brown studies, remembering with affection his companions of the voyage, looking forward to showing Professor Godwin his find, he returned to the hotel. He took the escalator to the second floor and pressed his thumb into the lock of his room. His door opened. Still in a dream, he looked dazedly around at the confusion.

Clothing was strewn on the floor. His valise lay up-ended on the bed with its seams ripped open. His few books were scattered about, their lenses smashed. The bedclothes were torn from the bed, and even his slippers had been slit to pieces.

Egon came back to reality with a gulp. He took one long step into the room and reached for the phone. He checked in mid-stride. The panel between his apartment and the one next door slid open. A heavily-built man stood in the opening surveying him with a broad and friendly smile on his lips.

Egon was the first to speak. "Did you do this?" he asked, more in bewilderment than indignation.

The other man came into the room. He was elegantly dressed in a gray jacket with gold clips on the lapels. He had a face distinguished by its utter ordinariness: the features were smooth and regular, and except for a certain coarseness about the jowls, handsome, as a male fashion model is handsome. It was the sort of face one would have difficulty remembering, five minutes after one had seen it; so utterly without identifying features was it, that the effect could only have been achieved by careful surgery.

He said, looking about him, "A very thorough job, I must say. No, Friend Egon, I didn't do it."

Egon stared at him. "Did you hear any noise?"

The other picked his way delicately to a chair and sat down. "May I?" he asked. "No, I heard nothing. If I had—"

Egon turned away. "Well, thanks for coming in. Excuse me. I'm going to call the manager."

"Just a moment. Please don't do that yet."

"Why not?"

The stranger coughed. "I have come about a matter concerning our mutual and deceased friend, Lon Faxon. A purely personal matter."

That brought Egon to a dead

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halt. "Faxon?" he said. "I don't understand."

"It's very simple. I have reason to believe that my dear old friend, Lon, was carrying something for Professor Thorp, and that he transferred it to you. A sentimental token. If you'll give it to me, I'll save you the trouble of delivering it. I'm going to Morna tonight, while you, I understand, will be detained for twenty-four hours."

Egon almost reached for his wallet. Then he hesitated. There was no immediate reason for his hesitation, except that the stranger's air was so smooth, so plausible, and at the same time so patronizing. He was like a high-powered salesman of helicars or vox-writers, and Egon disliked intensely being pressured by self-confident salesmen.

"You seem to have found out a good deal about me," he said. "How did you know my name? And how did you know Faxon gave me anything?"

"I have certain sources of information," said the other, raising his eyebrows.

"I see." Egon's lips tightened. "Then perhaps those sources also told you how to identify the—the thing Faxon gave me?"

The stranger looked hurt. "My dear Egon," he said. "You're really making a terrible fuss for a very small matter."

"Am I? Your dear old friend Lon must certainly have told you what he was carrying."

The stranger tapped his fingers together thoughtfully. "No," he said, "I'm afraid he didn't."

"Doesn't that seem curious to you?"

The stranger sighed. "You really aren't being very friendly," he said, reproachfully. Then he changed his tone, and became very brisk. "Very well. Let's not fence. You have something which Faxon gave you for Professor Thorp. I want it. It was intended for me in the end, anyway. And Thorp is no longer in a position to receive it."

"What do you mean?"

"He was killed in a helicar accident this morning."

Egon stared. Then he said, "I don't believe you."

"No? All you need do is turn on a newspaper. It was most unfortunate. He will be a great loss to science, I'm sure."

Egon frowned. Things were happening too rapidly. "If that's the case," he said, "I'll turn over Faxon's item to the C/I. I should have done so at the interview this afternoon."

The stranger stood up, drawing a check book from an inner pocket. "Don't be hasty, Friend," he said. He flipped open the book; the first check was made out to the account of Nick Egon. "Take a look at this," he said. He held it out, and Egon saw with astonishment that the check was made out for ten thousand manhours.

"If I'm not mistaken," said the stranger softly, as Egon gaped, "your salary is only five thousand

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emmas a year. All I need do is put my thumb print on this check, and you can do a little private research, buy your own apartment, take a trip . . ."

"Get out," Egon said suddenly.

"But my dear Friend—"

"Get out," Egon repeated. "This is either a monstrous practical joke, or you're deranged. I'll give you one minute, and then I'll put *my* thumb *here* and ring for the manager."

The stranger shook his head. "You leave me no alternative," he said, closing the checkbook.

Egon turned round to slide the door open. "Glad you see it my way," he began. Then he felt a light touch on the back of his neck.

His eyes opened to a gray and yellow blur which slowly resolved itself into a ceiling on which fell the circular reflection of a lamp. He twisted to one side, discovering as he did so that his head hurt, and found that he was lying on a low divan in a small room. Opposite him, a crescent-shaped desk was placed before two large windows which were masked by a thin, but effectively opaque, drapery.

A man was sitting on the edge of the desk, a slender but wiry man with a dark moustache that stood out against the dead whiteness of his complexion. As Egon looked, the man touched something on the desk and said in an oddly effeminate voice, "Gole. He's awake."

Egon sat up with an effort. The moustached man looked at him sardonically, making no effort to help him. When he was up, Egon felt the back of his head tenderly. There was a swelling there.

A door slid back. His visitor, the man with the undistinguished face, entered. He was evidently named Gole. He smiled cheerily at Egon and seated himself at the desk. The man with the moustache did not move until Gole said, "I'm sorry, Minel, I'd rather you sat somewhere else."

"Don't heave your tripe around," Minel said. "You want me to start on him?"

"Not just yet."

Egon rose, swaying. "You—kidnapped me," he said.

Gole shook a finger at him. "Don't be so old-fashioned," he said. "I brought you here so that we could talk undisturbed. A hotel room, after all. . . You have something I need, Friend. You refuse to part with it. I must therefore extract it from you somehow. You see? It's quite simple."

"Extract it from me," Egon repeated. "Good heavens, this is like some primitive story book. You'd actually use force?" He was as shocked as if someone had told him they practised cannibalism, or went to a private psychiatrist.

Gole tittered. "Say, rather, persuade you by recourse to what the ancients called the *argumentum ad baculum.*"

Egon shook his head to clear it. He wondered where he was. Some-

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where in one of the deserts? Or in one of the hundreds of private apartments on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th stories of the city? If the latter, there must be grounds about the place for Gole to speak of privacy. But surely the C/I would search for him when it was found he wasn't in his hotel room; surely they'd find him?

His thoughts were interrupted by the other's voice, grown all at once harsh. "Have you made up your mind to be a little more cooperative?"

Egon looked at Gole, and suddenly became aware of a false note in the other's appearance. His complexion was bronzed, but on the beautifully white collar of his shirt there was a minute smudge of brown, as if he powdered his face. It occurred to him that Gole's normal complexion might be that of a Venusian.

He said, aloud, "Suppose I haven't?"

"Oh, dear. Well, Friend Egon, there are several courses open to me. We may have to try all of them. First, I could administer one of several drugs to you. Second, I could subject you to a series of questions and note the responses on an electroencephalograph. Or third, I could let Minel go to work on you."

Egon looked from Gole to the moustached man, who was leaning against the wall with his arms folded, smiling. All at once, he began to feel rather frightened. It had never seemed likely that anyone would try to get something from him against his will: why should it? The world of the Study Centers was a world of social responsibility in which every person knew his place, did his work, and never voluntarily performed an act that would harm a fellow student. But Gole and Minel were outside that world; they belonged to another way of life, another way of thinking.

He said, in an attempt to be rational, "Look here, why is this thing I've got so important to you? I don't see—"

"It's none of your business, Friend," Gole broke in. "All that concerns you is that I want it. And I don't like things to stand in the way of what I want."

Egon stiffened. "I don't like being threatened," he said, angrily.

Gole motioned with his head. At that, Minel stepped forward and seized Egon by the wrist.

"Now, just a minute—" Egon began.

The next moment, an excruciating pain shot up his arm. He staggered, and while he was off-balance, Minel hit him on the jaw. He fell against the divan and caught at it to steady himself.

Minel bent close to him. He caught, incongruously, a scent of perfume. "Take it easy, dearie," the thug said, gently. "You'll fall."

Egon tried to get to his feet. Minel stepped away and took out a rod about the size of a pencil. A

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cable twisted from the back of it, disappearing into the thug's pocket. From the other end, a slender, flexible wire sprang. Without warning, Minel slapped the wire across Egon's cheek.

The archaeologist felt a stab of blinding agony run through his jaw and down his neck. It was like a hundred toothaches, a thousand neuralgias. It was so violent and unexpected that he lost his breath.

Once again, Minel raked the thing across his face, and then his neck. He heard a hoarse screaming and realized that it was himself, but he couldn't stop.

Minel glanced towards the desk. Gole was resting on his elbows and there was a smile of pure, perfect delight on his face.

Egon managed to drag himself to a sitting position on the floor. *He likes it,* he thought with horror, staring at Gole. *He could have had what he wanted by drugs or hypnosis, but he preferred it this way because he likes it!*

As if in answer to his thought, Gole said, "You see, my dear Friend, it would be better for you to cooperate. I like people to give me what I want *voluntarily.* Drugs, for example, are so—so objective."

He crooked a finger. Minel moved close again and Egon, without being able to help himself, cringed away. But the thug grabbed him, hauled him to his feet, and propelled him towards the desk.

"Have you had enough?" Gole asked.

Egon was holding his jaw which burned like fire. He gasped, "You won't get anything out of me with this—this disgusting—primitive—"

"Don't approve of the *argumentum ad baculum,* eh?" Gole chuckled. "Now, let's be reasonable. I know who went through your hotel room. He didn't find what I want. Obviously, you had it on you."

He opened a drawer and took out a box, which he emptied on the desk in front of him. "Here are the contents of your pockets," he said. "Wallet—I assure you we haven't touched your money or papers—pens, notebooks, change purse, a pocket torch, an antique silver coin, a comb, a knife, a few other odds and ends."

He dropped his voice, looking up at Egon. "I could rip all these things to bits," he said. "But I'd rather have it the easy way. Besides, the thing I want might be damaged. I can't take that chance. Now, you needn't say a word. All you have to do is point. You'll be released at once. The check I showed you will be handed to you, and another ten thousand added to it."

It was born in upon Egon that he was caught in something larger, more nightmarish, than he had imagined. Twenty thousand man-hours! Whoever Gole was, whatever was behind him, money was the least of his concerns. With one corner of his mind he wondered desperately what could make Faxon's photo of his son so inconceivably desirable.

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But the greater part of his mind blazed with anger. There was something indecent in the very thought of someone tossing away twenty thousand *emmas* so lightly—almost as indecent as the callousness with which they tortured him. And the torture itself was an outrage beyond belief. Never in his life had Egon been *forced* to do anything. He realized that he could not give in to it. These men might well kill him. It was clear that they understood only two grounds of discussion: violence and bribery. But he recognized just as clearly that to accept either of those alternatives would mean the abandonment of all that he lived by: the ideas of human dignity, honesty, and honor.

He clenched his teeth. "Go to hell," he said.

Gole's face hardened. "I'll give you ten seconds to reconsider," he said. "One thing we've learned from the past. The best methods are the simple, direct ones. I'll hand you over to Minel. And I assure you, in less than an hour you'll talk. It will be an agreeable hour for me."

Egon knew with an inward shudder that this was true. If he was certain of anything, it was that he could not physically stand another fifteen minutes of that burning, furious pain. Desperately, he caught hold of the edge of the desk, his mind groping wildly for a chance of escape.

"Wait a minute," he said. "You can't—"

"Yes I can. Minel!" said Gole, sharply.

Egon was not aware of any conscious decision. Under his fingers lay a deep, ornamental moulding along the edge of the desk. He gripped it with his fingers and heaved. The desk caught the other off-balance as he leaned back in his chair; he was toppled over with the desk on top of him. Egon sprang to the windows and dove headfirst through the curtains.

Glass showered about him as he landed sprawling in a patch of moss and rolled into a clump of bushes, dazed and almost senseless. Above him, he heard muffled shouts. Then a dull report sounded and he heard a whining yowl in the air over his head.

Someone caught him by the arms and dragged him to his feet. A voice whispered, "Can you walk?"

He nodded, speechless.

"Get him to the car," said the voice. "Derek's covering from the other side. Quick!"

He was hustled through the shrubbery. Beyond, beneath a couple of feathery trees stood a sand-colored helicar. He was pushed in. The door slammed. Egon collapsed against the cushions. Through the transparent roof he caught confused glimpses of streets, of a tunnel, of a vertical shaft up which they shot, then of dark streets lined with warehouses. The car dropped to a halt in a dim alley. Egon was pulled out. He tried to look more closely at his captors, but they wore

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sand-hoods that masked their faces. He could only see that one was extraordinarily short, like a child, or a Martian. He was hurried up a short flight of stairs, through a dark room full of office furniture and into what seemed a closet. A door slid open. A flood of sudden light blinded him. He stood squinting, and then he was pushed into the room that lay beyond.

He found himself in a small but trim apartment. Three walls bore huge stereo-murals of Earth scenes: snowy mountain peaks and dark forests, with the glint of the sea in the distance. A large and complex filing machine, its rows of lenses glittering in the light, completely covered the fourth wall.

"Sit down, please," someone said.

He fell into the nearest chair. His new captors removed their hoods and he was able to see their faces.

One was the diplomatic courier from the liner, whom Martin had known as Hatchet (or possibly Ratchet). Now, however, he was dressed in dark, close-fitting coveralls that became him better than the foppish clothes he had worn. The second was a four-foot Martian, his smooth, swollen head shaking with a constant tremor, his chinless face even more lugubrious than usual. The third was a woman.

She was nearly as tall as he. A cap of black hair cut straight above level brows, a tan complexion almost translucent that showed the pink of health, clear gray eyes, determined, calm, and observant. She looked like a rocket pilot, and when she spoke her voice had the authoritative ring of a first officer.

"Feeling better, Friend Egon?" she asked. "Abel, give him a drink."

"You know my name?" Egon said.

"Yes." She took a glass from the diplomatic type and handed it to Egon. "Don't be afraid," she said. "It's only brandy."

Egon drank and let his head sink back against the back of the chair. He was conscious of great fatigue; it had been a long night.

"Gole was not easy on you," the Martian said, in fluty tones. "He is a rough man."

"What's it all about?" Egon asked. "Who is Gole? Who was Faxon? What was the—" He hesitated, reminding himself that he did not know these people.

The three exchanged glances. Abel said, "Better tell him, Lissa. He'll be easier to work with."

The girl nodded. "Yes, I agree. Look here, Friend. I know that all this must be very confusing for you, being kidnapped and beaten and threatened. I know you're wondering how we come into the picture. Well, the fact is that Faxon, the man on the P-44, was a drug-runner."

Egon sat up. "What?"

"That's right. Faxon was carrying twenty thousand *emmas* worth of a rare drug called *silbar*. He was

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to pass it on to a contact man at Tanggra, who in turn would deliver it to Gole. When Faxon realized that our man, Abel here, had him spotted on the ship, he passed the container on to you. We don't know how it was disguised—in fact," she added, glancing sidelong at Abel with a momentary tightening of her lips, "we didn't realize it had been passed on to you until afterward."

"Oh," Egon said. He looked at Abel and said, "So it was you who searched my hotel room?"

The other nodded. "Sorry, chum," he said. "It was in the line of duty."

"I see."

"Now, Friend," Lissa went on, crisply, "you know the whole story. If you'll just hand over the item Faxon gave you, we'll be grateful. In fact, I think we can even arrange for the reward to be paid to you."

Egon rubbed his chin thoughtfully. In only a few hours he had become warier, less trustful. He said, "So you're agents of the government? Narcotics squad, or something like that? Naturally, you've got credentials."

"Naturally," said the girl, brightly. "I'll show them to you if you're not satisfied."

"I'm *not* satisfied. In the first place, the thing Faxon gave me wasn't exactly designed to hold twenty thousand *emmas* worth of drugs."

Lissa bit her lip. Abel put in, "That drug can be hidden in a very small space, Friend."

Egon began to feel, once again, an unaccustomed anger boiling within him. He controlled himself, however, and said, "I somehow have the feeling you people think of scientists as dreamers, with no practical sense. Nevertheless, a few practical objections to your story occur to me. For instance, doesn't it seem odd to you that Gole would offer me twenty thousand *emmas* for a package of drugs worth twenty thousand *emmas*?"

They were silent. He went on, "And it seems to me odd that a narcotics agent should kill a drug-runner rather than arrest him. You did kill Faxon, didn't you?" he said, staring at Abel.

The man's lip twisted. "You're boxed," he said. "Faxon fell off the seat and was killed accidentally."

"It's funny," said Egon, without humor, "but I don't believe that. Do you?" he said to Lissa. "I heard this man—Abel—talking to Faxon a short time before the accident. And I suppose Professor Thorp's accidental death came out of the same box? I was supposed to deliver the item to Thorp, not to a contact man in Tanggra."

The Martian uttered the peculiar neighing chuckle of his race, fluttering his long, six-fingered hands as if they were streamers. "You had better tell him the truth, Lissa," he said. "This man is not so stupid."

The girl blushed. Then she pulled up a low chair and sat down.

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"I never said he was stupid," she replied. And fixing her large gray eyes on Egon, she said, "Why are you so anxious to know, Friend? Can't you take my word for it that the thing we want belongs to Earth? It may mean the difference between life and death for all of us. It really won't matter if you know what it is or why we want it."

Egon shrugged. "It's very easy to explain," he said. "I'm a scientist. I've been brought up to believe in certain things, among them the principle of free choice and voluntary submission to the things that are good for society. I have never been asked to do anything without reason. I've never been asked to take things on trust; rather, to put them to the test and make sure of the answers.

"Well, I don't like to change. I'll tell you this, frankly. I didn't like Gole's methods of treating me. I don't see why I should accept you any more freely or quickly than I accept Gole. You haven't been honest with me."

"Remember, Egon," said the Martian. "We did rescue you from Gole."

"I don't think I owe you anything for that. You helped me because you want the same thing he wants. If I don't like your story I'm going directly to the C/I and let them take over."

Lissa said, in a hard voice, "You may never get to the C/I, Friend."

Egon bristled. But the Martian said, "She is speaking not of us, but of Gole. He will be looking for you."

Once more, Egon felt the touch of fear; his jaws and throat still burned from the touch of that dreadful whip.

"Go on," he said.

Lissa clasped her hands in her lap. "Do you listen to the papers?" she said.

"Not very often."

"You know what the Teepees are?"

"The Traditionalist Party?"

"Yes. As you may know, they maintain an Opposition in the Central Council, and they've been legislating for an end to the Martian Guardianship. Their position is that it is the right and duty of humanity—spell that with a capital H—to use all the resources of the planets. They claim the Guardians are preventing the full use of Mars for the benefit of mankind."

"I know that," Egon said. "I heard it not long ago from one of their own leaders, as a matter of fact."

Abel chuckled. "Ackroyd. That's right."

"Well," said Lissa, "here's something you don't know, because Ackroyd was keeping it a secret. Their next step is going to be an all-out drive for the extermination of the native Martians. The first gun will be a statement that Martians aren't classifiable as human beings, but are an inferior race, a kind of mammalian sub-species, or

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however a biologist would put it."

"But — that's absurd!" Egon burst out. "It's immoral, and totally unscientific. Martians don't—" He hesitated.

"—don't look like you," the Martian put in. "Is that it?"

"Yes."

"Some of your people find us repulsive," said the Martian, with what passed for a smile. "I know that. Nevertheless, it is true that we are biologically almost identical with your species. But so are other of the lower orders: gibbons, gorillas, chimpanzees, even lemurs."

"Exactly," said Lissa. "The Teepees are going to come out into the open. They'll claim that no one would set up a Guardianship for a planet full of monkeys."

Egon drew his brows together. "Do you mean," he said, "that they are seriously saying it is right and moral to take a—a whole planet away from its inhabitants?"

"Right and moral have nothing to do with it," she said, drily. "Another thing you don't know is that nine of the ten leaders of the Teepees are also representatives of some of the most powerful interests on the three planets. They include ferrous and non-ferrous metals, synthetics, radiation, transport, and chemicals. What's more, they are all leaders in the Venusian clans—several of them by adoption."

"Sure," Abel put in. "As far as they're concerned, Study Centers and Martian natives are just so much cobweb. And you know what you do with cobweb? Brush it aside."

"He puts it crudely," said Lissa, "but that's about the size of it. All the talk about the Future of Humanity and the Progress of Mankind is a smoke-screen. Once let them sell the idea that Martians are only inferior animals, and—well, you might have the International Wildlife Federation complaining, but the Guardianship would be set aside. Most Martians aren't like Rhyllon, here, as you know. He's a Center Martian. The others are gentle; they'd be swept aside and the planet would be plundered for the benefit of the Eight Clans. As for your Study Centers, how long do you think they'd be allowed to remain in existence as free and independent centers of research that don't produce direct profits for the Clans?

"Professor Thorp saw it coming. And he threw in with them."

"Thorp?" Egon said, slowly.

"Yes. He was a coward."

"No. Don't say that. Who knows what they put him through?" Egon shuddered. "I can understand. I've had a taste of their persuasion." Then he looked up. "But surely we aren't so primitive that commonsense has vanished? Even though many irrational people may fall for the argument, surely the Council will never vote out the Guardianships on so slender a pretext?"

"Ah, that's where Gole comes in," said Lissa. "He is a member of one of the most powerful of the

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Clans. And he is what they used to call, long ago, an *agent provocateur*. It's his job to arrange an 'incident.' We don't know what it will be or when it will happen, but we know that he holds all the threads in his hands. Members of the Council, enough for a voting majority, have been bribed or blackmailed or threatened. Gole's little 'incident' will, we think, provide the spark to touch off a carefully arranged popular demonstration and then the carrying of a bill to the vote.

"We don't know who these councilmen are, but their names and the details about them—that is, what blackmail was used on them, or the amounts of the bribes—were what Faxon was bringing to Mars. I imagine that as soon as Gole had those lists in his hands, he'd have gone on with his 'incident.' "

Egon drew a long breath. "They're—this is incredible. It's the most inhumanly antisocial operation I ever heard of."

Lissa eyed him soberly. "You don't realize how fully antisocial they are," she said. "Gole could have squeezed out of you all he wanted to know by means of drugs, for instance. But he wanted you to crawl, he wanted you to scream out the information under torture, or better still give it to him in exchange for a payment so that he could always have a grip on you. If you hadn't jumped through that window, you'd have been a lost soul forever—either way."

Abel lit a cigarette, and added, "You were upset about my using violence on poor old Faxon. You're like all the Study Center types, you think everything can be settled by discussion. Did you try discussing the problem with Gole?"

Egon flushed. "We needn't get into a long theoretical argument now. Gole doesn't prove that men must return to the Dark Ages. What about you three? You're secret agents, aren't you?"

"Never mind what we are," Lissa said. "I've told you enough so that you can see we're in favor of the Guardianship and against Gole and his backers. Now, then. You can decide, can't you?"

"All right," said Egon. "He gave me a photo of his son."

"His son? Faxon hasn't any family," said Abel.

"Never mind that. Of course he hasn't," Lissa snapped. "How big was this picture? Any frame?"

"About two by three. No frame. It was well-worn, so I imagine that when Gole saw it he thought it was mine. It's ironic that his own man disguised it so well . . ."

"Um. And he still has it?"

"I suppose so. He has all my belongings."

"And you didn't tell him what it was?"

Egon shook his head.

Lissa sprang to her feet like a cat. She strode to the filing machine and snapped down the switch of a communicator. "Hsien," she said. "Is Derek with you? Good. Get

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right back to LS8. It's a photo of a boy. In a wallet. Bring the whole works. Yes—if you have to. Otherwise, keep it quiet. I'll send Abel to take the other street."

She broke the connection and whirled on Abel. "You heard me," she said. "Get going. I told Hsien to shoot if necessary. But I think if we have that list—"

"Are you staying here?" Abel asked, sliding back the door.

"Yes, I'd better. Get it back to me as quick as you can."

Abel nodded, and left. Ryhllon said, "Shall I stay also?"

"For the time being."

"What about *him*?" Rhyllon jerked his head at Egon. "It may not be safe for him to go."

Lissa closed the door. "You're right. You'd better remain for a while, Friend Egon," she said. "At least, until this is over. Then we can see about protecting you from Gole—if we still have to."

Egon stood up gingerly. The pain in his face had subsided to a dull ache, and he was feeling more like himself. "I wonder," he said, "if I could have another drink. I think I need it . . ."

Lissa got him one. The Martian had folded himself up in a corner and was resting, as his people did, with both eyes open and his slender ear-stalks erect instead of drooping. Egon took a few steps about the room and sipped his brandy; then he turned to look at Lissa. She had thrown herself into a chair with her ankles crossed. Their eyes met.

He said, "You're a pilot, aren't you?"

"I was. Not of an interplanetary liner, though. That's for old ladies who can stand the boredom. I was captain of a patrol vessel, one of those high-powered, two place jobs."

"Oh. How did you get involved in this—side-line?"

For a moment, her eyes flashed. Then she smiled, and when she did so her face softened and he could see that she was really very beautiful. "It's not a side-line," she said, quietly. "My brother was in it. He was killed by a man like Gole."

"I see."

"Do you, Egon? For people like Gole, it isn't only the Martians who are a lesser race. It's everyone who isn't part of the clique, who isn't a clan member, everyone who will work for them, all the boot-lickers . . . and of course, all the followers. They have plenty of followers; people who accept any authoritative, loud voice without questioning it, people who believe in the phrase 'the lower orders,' people who want to spread humanity and its gospels everywhere at the expense of all other life."

"I suppose you're right," Egon said. "But look here, we've been able to establish a decent sort of life here in our Study Centers. Why can't—"

"I know what you're going to say. Yes, it might be true for all of us today. But on Venus, things were different. The tremendous

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physical difficulties to be faced, and the small size of the original colony, fostered the growth of tight work units based on family groups. At first, this was fine, but as years passed these groups became clans, and as you know the heads of the Eight Clans, the original pioneers, became autocrats with almost supreme power. Supreme power is a dangerous thing, Egon. It's like a taste of *silbar*—there really is such a drug, by the way. A few ounces and you want more, and more. Addicts will kill anyone to get the stuff."

"And you think the Venusians—the Teepee Leaders—won't hesitate—"

"They won't stop at anything. Not even war."

Egon drank the remainder of his brandy. "Aren't you afraid of that?" he said. "Doesn't your kind of violence, and theirs, when they clash, lead to war?"

"No, Egon. We're trying to prevent a war, by stopping people like Gole. What about you? Were you passive? Or did you jump through a window?"

He put down his glass, and sighed. After a moment, he said, "Lissa."

"Yes?"

"When this is all over . . ."

"Yes?"

"Well, do you ever have dinner with anyone who isn't a secret agent?"

Lissa turned red. Before she could reply, however, the door behind her slid open. Gole stepped through, holding a flat, ugly-looking Bolsen fitted with a silencer.

"You should never leave your base unguarded, my dear," he said, smugly.

Lissa and Egon froze. Rhyllon's head came up and his ear-stalks dropped. The slight movement drew Gole's attention.

"Well, well," he said. "Got a house pet, have you?" He jerked the muzzle of the gun. "Stand up, you."

Slowly, Rhyllon got to his feet. He was no higher than Gole's elbow. He raised his hands in the air. Then Gole, with a chill smile, shot him.

The Bolsen made no more noise than the click of a door lock, but Rhyllon's body flew apart, literally disintegrated before their eyes and was plastered over the stereo-mural behind it.

Gole swung the muzzle towards Egon, and the archaeologist braced himself. But the other only said, "Come on, move," and stepped aside. Beyond him, in the doorway, were two more men armed with magnum hand-guns.

Lissa cast one glance at Egon. Her face was deathly white. Egon himself was shaking with the reaction to Rhyllon's death, but managed to hold down his quaking stomach. Lissa went to the door and Egon followed, with Gole behind him.

They were taken down the dark

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stair to a helicar that waited below, and pushed into the back seat. One of Gole's men sat on the jump seat with his gun on his knee, pointed at them. Gole and the other man got in the front and the car swept away. In minutes, it had emerged from a tunneled ramp on to a flight stage. There was no one about. Egon was astonished to find that the sky was still dark, although the east was graying; he had expected it to be daylight. He had passed through the stage of fatigue and was wide awake, unnaturally alert.

On the flight stage they were hustled from the car directly into a private jet. They were strapped into seats, side by side, with Gole and one man behind them and the other man in front. Minel was sitting in the pilot's bucket, and as they passed him he turned and smiled broadly at Egon. "Hello, dearie," he said. "Back to the fold, eh?" The next instant, with a roar, they were in the air.

They headed south. The dark red-brown of the tundra unrolled below them, with here and there a lonely monolith pointing to the sky, or a crumbling ring of stones, pitted by sand, relics of the long-vanished civilization which had left only the burrow-villages with their placid, small inhabitants.

Egon was very conscious of the warmth and nearness of Lissa, so close to him that their thighs and arms touched. She sat motionless, staring at her hands in her lap; then, as if aware of his gaze, turned her head.

"I'm sorry," she said, in an almost inaudible voice. "It seems to be over."

"Shut up," said Gole, behind them.

Egon moved his hand to touch hers. They did not speak again.

The ship slowed. Glancing through the window, Egon saw that they were above a low, eroded chain of hills that lay some three hundred miles from Station One. Even as he watched, the ship dropped. He saw that there was a low building in a fold of the hills, with a concrete stage nearby. In a few moments they had landed, and he and Lissa were marched to the building.

They went through a corridor into a large vestibule with an escalator in it. Gole went ahead; beneath the escalator he slid open a circular door and led them into a library. One whole wall contained a theater screen. On other walls there were books, including some old-fashioned bound ones, a newspaper screen, a projector, and a small private bar. There were no windows in *this* room, Egon noted.

Gole dismissed all but Minel, and then sat himself in a deep chair and leaned back.

He said, wagging his head playfully, "You must be more careful how you play with desks, Friend Egon. You gave me quite a bruise on the tummy."

He stroked his stomach as he

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spoke. Then, in the same tone, he said, "Your well-timed escape was something of a surprise, you see. So you aren't quite the innocent you pretended to be? Well, well. You took me in, I admit it."

Lissa said, "You're making a mistake, Gole. He has nothing to do with us."

Gole raised his eyebrows. "Dear me," he said. "Don't tell me my dear friend Lissa is interested in the young man. But how delightful. Only it doesn't change matters."

He sat up straight. "Look here, Egon," he said. "I'm a busy man, but I'm also a practical man. You're shrewd and smart. I never guessed you were working with them. I like smart people. I'm going to give you a chance to change sides."

"Oh?" said Egon. Involuntarily, he rubbed his jaw. The pain had quite gone, by now. "Go ahead," he said.

"You know what's at stake. But you don't seem to have realized that the game's over. The end is already determined. You can't stop it. We're going to win. Only a fool—like *her*—would doubt it.

"Oh, don't look so hurt, my boy," he added. "You can have her, too. A few minor adjustments in her psyche . . . You throw in with us, and you can be Chief of your Study Center. We need bright, willing, cooperative young men. Doesn't that sound attractive?"

"And all I have to do—?"

"Well, I'd like to know what it was that Faxon gave you," Gole murmured. He got up and took from his jacket pocket a flat container. Tapping it against the palm of one hand, he continued, "It's one of the things in here. But that's secondary, my boy. We're at the jump-off. The next few days, or hours, will see the whole thing settled whether you tell me or not. Your telling me would be a, shall we say? an earnest of your good intentions."

He licked his lips. "You know what these Martian house-pets say: 'From the hall of life there is one door, to the hall of death.' That's very good now I come to think of it. Yes, well, we're at the one door. There isn't any other, not for you."

Egon's knees shook under him. He was tempted—tempted and frightened. No man likes to look at his own extinction, and Egon was fond of life. Before, it had been a mere fear of physical pain that drove him, now it was the grin of death.

Then he remembered Rhyllon, and knew that however he decided they would have no mercy on him. He looked at Lissa, standing straight and brave, with her arms folded; she returned his look with one of her own, darting as an arrow.

He said, "Not interested, Gole."

Gole's lip twisted. "A sentimentalist," he remarked. "Go ahead, Minel."

The thug must have been standing directly behind Egon, for before the archaeologist could move

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he had been seized and slammed into a hard chair. He tried to rise, and sank instead into darkness.

He was a child of three or four. In another room, he could hear his mother singing. There were some wire cages on a bench, and Egon knew he was not to touch them. There were small white animals in one of them: mice, that his father used for something called "speriments." No one was watching him. He pried open the door of the cage and one of the little white creatures came out, twitching its pink nose, moving quickly and deftly as if on wheels. It darted to the edge of the table and leaped to the floor.

Egon wanted to stop it. He ran forward and stamped on it. He felt the tiny bones crunch underfoot, and felt the sickening give of its flesh. It squeaked once. And he could not get it off his shoe.

The memory vanished. Then, horribly, it began again, only now he was Egon the man and Egon the child, both at once. The mouse ran across the floor. He stamped on it. His gorge rose. He heard someone say, "Will you tell? Come on, talk." The mouse ran across the floor again. He stamped on it. And again.

He struggled wildly to push the nightmare out of his mind. He tasted salt on his lips. But once again, it was as if forceps were inserted into his brain, remorselessly plucking out the memory and exposing it to him.

All at once, he was awake and conscious. He was strapped in a chair. Minel was sitting opposite him with a white box on his lap from which a slender, glittering wire led to a band about Egon's brows. The thug was smiling fixedly. As Egon looked, Minel very slowly toppled forward and fell over the box. The back of his head was flattened and sticky and dark, as if it had been punched in.

Egon squeezed his eyes shut and opened them again. The image of the mouse appeared to be superimposed on Minel; then it vanished, as he pushed it out of his mind. His vision cleared. He saw Lissa, holding a small, dark-blue weapon, keeping it trained on Gole, who stood motionless, his mouth partly open.

Lissa said, "Egon. Are you all right?"

"I—I will be," he replied.

Slowly, she backed up until she could reach one of the straps that held his arms. She unbuckled it, still keeping the gun pointed at Gole.

"Undo the other," she said. "Can you walk?"

Fumbling with numb fingers, Egon got the other strap open and pulled the band from his head. "I'll walk," he said, hoarsely.

Lissa said to Gole, "Stand still, you. Don't touch that buzzer. Don't move at all." And to Egon, "Lock the door."

He staggered toward it, fell against the wall, slid the bolt to

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lock the door. At the same time, he heard a distant bell begin ringing.

"Lissa," he gasped. "It was an alarm."

"Doesn't matter," she said. "Can't be helped. Gole, give me Egon's wallet out of that box. Make it fast."

Gole's face was the color of weak coffee and milk, his Venusian pallor showing through the make-up. He opened the container and drew out the wallet.

"You'll never get out of here," he said, flatly.

As if to put a cap on his words, a crash sounded from the other side of the door. They heard a yell, and then two shots, one on top of the other. A neat round hole appeared in the tough plastic of the door, and the news screen shattered and fell tinkling to the floor.

Involuntarily, Lissa turned her head. Gole stepped away a pace and touched the huge theater screen. It opened and Gole slipped through the crack thus revealed.

Egon pushed with his hands against the wall at his back, and somehow hurled himself across the room. He got one foot wedged into the opening. Lissa stooped over the body of Minel and came up with a silenced Bolsen pistol.

"Go on," she said. "After him."

Egon forced himself through, and she followed. The screen swung back into place. They were in a narrow corridor dimly lighted by a thread of fluorescence along the ceiling.

Egon stood still for a moment, rubbing his face.

"Are you all right?" Lissa asked, again.

"I'm all right. That—devil!"

"I know. I heard . . ." She handed him the Bolsen. "You know how to use one of these?"

"Yes. I've fired them for practice." He took it a bit gingerly, fitting his hand inside the cup-shaped grip.

"I'll keep my blackjack," she said. "I know what it can do. I had it hidden. Gole was so intent on watching Minel, he forgot to watch me. He has a great capacity for enjoyment—of a certain kind."

They went down the corridor. It descended steeply, and Egon was the first to notice the change: the walls and floor, from dull sheets of metal became stone. The air turned chill and musty.

"It's an ancient tunnel," he said. "If I only had some equipment!"

"It's just as well you haven't," said Lissa. "I must say, I admire the single-mindedness of you students."

The thread of light ended. They no longer needed it, however, for ahead of them a pale glow was visible. As they hastened on, it grew a little brighter; they emerged at length into a large square room, then into a circular chamber with the open dark blue sky far above them, like a bull's-eye. The chamber was shaped like a caisson, some

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forty feet across. Its walls, instead of stone, were made of some black substance that gleamed in the light like volcanic glass. It was two hundred feet, at least, to the opening above.

"Dead end," said Lissa.

"Then where's Gole?" asked Egon. "He couldn't just have flown—"

"But he did." Lissa pointed. In the center of the caisson lay a tarpaulin, and near it were fuel tanks, a tool bench, and a couple of spare tires.

"He must have kept a helicar here," she said. "It's a fine back door." She looked up at the shining back walls. "I wonder if he built this for himself?"

Egon shook his head. "I've never seen one before, but I'll bet anything it's Martian—and very old. The passage is certainly their work. This may have been a well, or a mine shaft."

He rapped the wall lightly with his knuckles. "Well, what do we do now?"

"Go back," Lissa said, briskly. "We can't climb these walls. I suspect that Gole never told his boys about this place—if he had, we'd have had them on our heels by now. There are two of us, with guns. We'll have to try to fight our way out somehow."

She took him by the arm and looked straight into his eyes. "Are you afraid?" she said.

Egon smiled at her. "You know," he said, trying to speak lightly, "you're really a very pretty girl, as well as being efficient. Sure, I'm afraid. All this is a little out of my line. But a scientist ought to be adaptable, don't you think?"

She blushed, and grinned. "You're fresh, too. Come on, this is hardly the time or place—" She swung away.

Egon followed her into the large square chamber that adjoined the well. He stopped for a moment to look about him. There were shelves here, of the same black substance which formed the caisson walls, compartments which must once have had doors, now vanished. The floor was covered with crumbled heaps of dust and gritty sand in which glittered particles of metal, or glass. Egon slapped helplessly at his pockets.

"Damn!" he said. "Gole has everything of mine, even my pocket torch. Haven't you got a light, Lissa? Just for a minute."

She began to say something, then checked herself and handed him a tiny cigarette lighter. He snapped it on and leaned close to peer at the walls. There were faint carvings, bas-reliefs that covered all of one wall, and beneath them worn hieroglyphs cut into the stone. Egon stared for a long moment, until at last Lissa said impatiently, "Come on, Egon. I sympathize with you, but we must get going."

"You don't understand," he said, in a hushed voice. "This is—this is unbelievable!"

"I'm sure. But Gole is on his

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way somewhere with those lists. First things first."

"First things!" said Egon, and began to laugh. Then he checked himself. "Of course. You're right." He returned the lighter to her. "Let's go, then. I've seen enough for now, in any case. I'll tell you one thing, though. We know the ancient Martians got to the Moon. Well, this place was a rocket launching shaft."

"Tell me later," Lissa said. "We've wasted enough time already."

They panted up the long tunnel. They came to the panel that opened into Gole's library. Egon whispered, "Think we can get it open from this side?"

Lissa nodded. There was a simple latch on one side of the panel. "Have that gun ready," she said.

She put her hand on the latch. Very softly and slowly she pulled the panel inward. Egon pressed close behind her, the Bolsen raised.

Lissa uttered an exclamation. Egon was on the point of firing, but she caught his arm. "No!" she said.

There were two men in the library. One was a Chinese, the other Lissa's partner, Abel.

"We cleaned them," Abel said. "It was a short fight but a merry one. Derek's searching the upper floors, looking for you."

"I'll get him," said the Chinese, whose name was Hsien. He stepped to the door and whistled shrilly.

"How did you find us?" Lissa asked.

Abel scratched his nose. "One of Gole's men was in the apartment when we went to search it. He told us."

Egon opened his mouth and closed it again. He decided he didn't want to know any details. Hsien returned with Derek, who was a chunky, blond man in a high-necked coverall. Both he and Hsien carried short-barreled automatic weapons.

Lissa said, "Gole got away. And he knows the list is in the wallet; he's got it with him. I'm afraid I made a mess of things at this end."

"Wait a minute," Egon put in. "I've just had a thought. What's today's date?"

"You got an appointment?" said Derek.

"I've just remembered something. It might be useful. What *is* the date?"

"Fourteenth of March," said Abel.

"Faxon told me he'd be at Tanggra until the tenth May, Earth time. That's today. You said that as soon as he got the lists, Gole would go ahead with his—incident. I wonder if this could be the day set for it, and Tanggra—"

Abel snapped his fingers. "Councilman Ackroyd! That's one of the places he was to visit. He was going to the Martian village outside Tanggra."

"Have you got the car?" Lissa asked sharply.

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"Of course," said Abel. "But there's a jet outside as well."

"That's right. They won't need it any more. Let's go!"

With Lissa at the controls, the jet streaked northward towards the region which had once been known as Syrtis Major. Below, the ground was a blur of browns and reds as they passed over the miles of tundra: dry, sandy earth and low shrubs, really giant mosses. Then came a sea of sand, tan and gray, blown by the wind, and after that a rolling country of stunted plants that resembled heather. They flew above a range of broken hills and saw below them the shining surface of a salt flat. This was Templeton Marsh, and on its far shore was Tanggra Study Center, a cluster of low, pastel colored laboratories and living units, among which were the web of a radio-telescope, latticed towers bearing power lines, and an observatory dome. A couple of miles beyond lay a straggling forest of spindly thorn-trees, and on the fringe of this forest was a Martian village.

Martian villages had neither name nor government. In them, perhaps nine-tenths of the natives lived. The thorn-trees furnished abundant fresh water, for which they were tapped much as maple trees on some parts of Earth are tapped for syrup. Edible mosses grew all about, and stunted bushes bearing fluffy seed-heads that could be combed out and made into thread, for weaving. The mild, quiet people dwelt in burrows in the earth; they had few crafts, and no art but that of singing. Their lives were uneventful save for occasional sandstorms, featureless as most of the surface of the planet itself, peaceful and short. Their only connection with the past civilization of their planet was that their villages were built near the sites of ancient ruins. Whatever the former uses of these empty, underground constructions, they were now regarded as sacred places: a flat, stone-flagged floor was called the Hall of Life, and the labyrinthine lower passages reached through a dolmen, or doorway, were called the Hall of Death. Beyond this, no student had yet determined what, if any, were the religious beliefs or rites of the Martians.

While they were yet some distance from the village, Egon could see that it was the center of unusual attraction. Helicars and larger planes were converging on the spot, and below, outside the village, they could see half-trucks parked amid a tangle of apparatus. Lissa brought the jet down and turned to Abel.

"Got some credentials?" she said.

He took out a sheaf of papers and sorted out five. Three were newsmen's cards, the other two were diplomatic passes. He handed them round.

"These will get us close enough to spot trouble," Lissa remarked,

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giving one of the diplomatic passes to Egon.

They got out of the jet. People were already pressing towards the center of the village where, before the stone dolmen that marked the entrance to the barrow, a stand had been erected. On it was a lectern which contained a prompting device and microphones, and it was flanked by the cameras of the news reporters, which would broadcast three-dimensional solid pictures all over the planet, and by long-range television cameras which would project the scene to Earth. Reporters swarmed everywhere, as well as officials of the Guardianship, visitors from various Study Centers, and, moving softly and slowly in large groups, Martians from the village itself.

Abel, Hsien, and Derek disappeared. Lissa and Egon walked slowly towards the stand. When they had shown their passes and pressed into the very first row, Abel rejoined them. Egon noticed an unexpected facet to the man: as he forced his way through the crowd he shoved against the humans, but when he came to groups of Martians he bowed politely and waited for them to move to let him through. Perhaps he, too, remembered Rhyllon, Egon said to himself.

Abel said, "Not a sign of Gole."

"Keep looking," said Lissa.

"I've got Derek on the right and Hsien on the left. I'm moving back. You stay here." With that, Abel left them, nodding and smiling as if he had said something amusing.

The announcer was already speaking. ". . . a great pleasure indeed to introduce Ralph Ackroyd, Conclaveman for Nether Zealand, distinguished member of the Traditional Fair Play Party, and member of the Central Council of Earth. Friend Ackroyd."

A technician turned up the sound of artificial applause mingled with the strains of the Council Anthem. Ackroyd, his white mane bristling above his florid face, strode up to the stand and bowed his head. The sound faded.

"Friends," Ackroyd began, "I am speaking to you from the sands of Mars. Many, indeed by far the greater number of you, have never experienced what I am now experiencing: the cool, dry air, the sky darker than our own, the bracing quality of an atmosphere that is, to all purposes, virgin and fresh. It is, in fact, why I have come here—to experience this for myself. Not to acquire by second-hand, for that isn't my nature. No, Friends, to see, taste, hear, and learn at first-hand, and then to report to you.

"Before me—you can see them when the cameras scan the crowd—are Martians. Not Marsmen, not human beings who live and work on this planet, but Martians, natives of this spot. Think of it: living beings, unallied to us, strange and different, born of another earth. It is not surprising that our first

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contacts with them produced wonder and awe, a desire to meet them on equal terms. And later, when we found them incapable of such equality, a desire to protect and cherish them. Hence, the Guardianship was established, a worthy body, pledged to protect these—creatures."

He paused, and his bright little eyes sparkled. "Yes," he said, "I repeat that word. Creatures. I have come here to see them, to observe them, to meet them for myself and learn, if that is possible, the truth. And this is what I say advisedly, they are creatures, but they are not men.

"Oh, my friends, I wish that you might stand here beside me and see them as I do. They have no homes; this village is only called so by courtesy, for it consists of holes in the ground as you will see later. They have no government, no arts, no science, not even religion, that blessed faith which separates mankind from the beasts. They communicate, yes, as birds or dogs communicate. They are emotionless, passive, without the spark that is reason and intelligence. To look into their dull and gentle eyes is to know that they have no souls. They are not human beings."

He held up a forefinger. "I repeat, not human beings."

At that moment, Lissa caught Egon's arm. "Look," she whispered. "There's Gole."

Egon had seen him at the same time. He was standing within the shadow of the entrance to the barrow, just inside the stone pillars. His hands were buried in the pockets of his jacket, and he stood perfectly motionless, the handsome undistinguished features set in sober attentiveness. No one who saw him would ever remember what he looked like: he was the very archetype of the Man in a Crowd.

"Egon," Lissa said, in a very soft voice, "I have the most awful feeling. Do you remember what he said to you? 'From the hall of life there is one door, to the hall of death.' Then he laughed, and said that that was good, and he'd have to bear it in mind."

"Yes, I remember."

"I just realized what the 'incident' could be."

"What?"

"Don't you see where Ackroyd's speech is going? He's going to wind up with the conclusion that the Martians are an inferior order, a lesser race. He's going to call for their extermination, just as I told you. What do you think would happen if, after he asked for an end to the Guardianship, he was killed by a mysterious shot fired from the entrance to a Martian ruin?"

Egon glanced at her. "Are you serious? You mean the members of his own party would kill him in cold blood for the sake of—"

He stopped. From his own limited experience, he could guess that no sentiment of loyalty or love would stir men like Gole.

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He acted without thinking. He held up his hand and called in a loud, clear voice, "Just a moment, Councilman."

Ackroyd was used to hecklers. He stopped with a benign smile, and two burly C/I men began to move towards Egon.

"You and I traveled on the same liner," Egon shouted. "You told me you'd always be approachable—that I could come and talk to you—that you weren't like a certain Councilman I could name. Or have you forgotten already?"

Ackroyd said, "I certainly haven't forgotten, Friend Egon. Let him pass, please. I'd like to hear what he has to say."

"Thank you, Councilman," Egon said. "May I come up there?" Without waiting, taking advantage of the C/I men's hesitation, he jumped up on the stand.

"I'll be brief," he said. "I'm an archaeologist, as you know. And you know I'm not a crackpot. I haven't come to heckle you, Councilman. But there's one thing wrong with your speech. The Martians *are* human beings. What's more, I can prove it."

From the corner of his eye, he saw Gole move. One hand began to emerge from his pocket.

Ackroyd, looking just a little flustered, said, "My dear young feller—"

He got no further. For Egon caught him round the neck and fell to the floor of the stand, dragging Ackroyd with him.

One of the C/I men sprang up on the platform, reaching for them. At the same instant, there was a faint click. The C/I man's head vanished in a bloody splash. His body fell sideways against the lectern and sent it crashing down.

Egon rolled free of Ackroyd and dropped off the back of the stand. A gout of sand and stone rose up beside him with a roar. He heard someone shout, "Don't shoot *him*, you fool!"

Egon saw Derek running towards the dolmen. Gole had gone. Egon leaped towards the stone doorway; he got there at the same time Derek did.

"Look out, damn it!" Derek panted. "He may be waiting just inside."

"Never mind," gasped Egon. "Got a torch? Give it to me. I know these ruins. You don't."

Behind him there were shouts and confusion. Derek, without another word, tossed him a pocket torch. He lighted it and darted inside the portals.

He had twice investigated this particular barrow. The long central passageway with numerous blind-alley branches led down to a chamber knee-deep in dust. From it, a dozen labyrinthine ways went out and one of them ultimately led to a shallow, bowl-shaped hollow in the forest. Egon did not doubt that Gole's helicar was there.

Fortunately, Gole was not waiting in ambush. Egon's torch cast a clear white light on the time-eaten

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walls. He could see deep tracks in the dust before him, and dust-motes floated thickly across the beam of his torch. He began to descend, and as he went the noise behind him faded. There was silence, and his pulse throbbed in his ears under the weight of the earth.

He advanced cautiously, throwing the light into the blind alleys which were rarely more than a few yards long. At last, he came to the entrance of the central cell. He had been counting his steps; when he came to the last bend in the passage, he snapped off the torch.

It was well that he did so. While he was still masked by the angle of the passage wall, he heard that deadly click, and in the utter darkness a faint greenish pencil of light appeared. Sparks flew from the stone and there was a ripping crack. Chips rattled about him, and one struck him on the cheek, stinging like a wasp.

Egon stood still in indecision, his fingers sweating within the grip of the Bolsen pistol. Then he moved forward a little way, lifted the light above his head and thrust it round the corner. He flashed it on, peering beneath it for a quick look, hoping that if Gole fired again the shot would go high.

In the circle of brightness he saw Gole. The man was half-crouching near one of the passages, the dust clinging to his legs and misting the air about him. He had a small torch in one hand, his Bolsen in the other. When the light came on he lifted the pistol but this time there was no sound. His face convulsed, and with a curse he threw the heavy gun at the light. It clanged against the stone. Gole turned and made for the tunnel behind him.

It took a moment for Egon to react to the fact that the Bolsen's propellant charge must have failed, and that Gole was weaponless. He entered the chamber and started for the passage by which Gole had left. He turned off his torch for a moment, and far down that tunnel he saw a tiny flickering reflection that must be Gole's torch. Then he realized that the other had taken the wrong passage. This one, instead of leading out to the forest, ended after three bends in a *cul de sac*.

A fierce elation filled him. Going as quickly as he could, he entered the tunnel. The dust was all about him, for the lesser gravity prevented it from settling quickly, and Egon had to crook his arm over his nose and mouth to keep from choking. He counted the three bends, and flashed his lamp straight before him, and there was Gole.

He whirled round as Egon entered, throwing himself back against the blank wall, holding his own torch as if it were a gun. He must have just realized that he was trapped. His eyes glittered like those of a wild beast.

"Don't shoot," he said.

"Come out of there," Egon said, in an unnatural voice.

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"You'll shoot if I do—the way you stepped on that mouse," said Gole.

The hair rose on Egon's neck. He began to tremble.

"That—that's not—" he stammered. His throat closed, and the hand holding the light began to tremble.

"Just like a mouse," Gole whispered. "Crunch! Isn't that what you'll do, Egon?"

The torch and the pistol were unbearably heavy, and shook in his grasp. The earth seemed to rock beneath him. Egon fought, slowly and painfully, against the terror which overwhelmed him, greater than his hatred of Gole. He wanted only to run, to bury his face somewhere, to scream and fall into oblivion.

But at that instant Gole sprang at him. So frozen were Egon's thoughts that the other seemed to move with deliberation like a slowed-down motion picture, his torch brandished like a club, his teeth bared in a grin of triumph.

It was the grin that really saved Egon.

He thrust the Bolsen straight out in front of him, and squeezed the grip with the last of his strength. There was an ugly, smashing sound, and then silence.

The bare, blue-walled office of the Director of Tanggra Study Center was crowded. There were Councilman Ackroyd, the Director himself, Bendel the Chief of Mars Civil Intelligence, Mortimer, one of the members of the Board of Guardians, Egon, with Lissa beside him, and a lean, ebony-faced man named Dhotal who was Lissa's superior.

Dhotal held the torn and blood-spattered photograph of the boy in the Space Scout uniform. He set it carefully on the Director's desk, uncorked a small bottle, and poured a few drops of an amber fluid on the face of the photo. With his handkerchief, he rubbed until the child's image disappeared. Beneath it, clear and sharp, appeared incredibly tiny lines of typescript.

"Well, Councilman," he said grimly, to Ackroyd, "you came to Mars to see for yourself. Now you can see."

Ackroyd wiped his forehead. He looked shaken and older, but his voice was still peppery as he said, "Afraid I find it difficult to believe. My own party conspiring to kill me—takes a bit of getting used to. And these Councilmen, whose names you say are here—"

"I don't think this information should be released just yet," said Mortimer. "I believe it ought to be settled *in camera*. We can tell the reporters it was a fanatic . . . a madman, perhaps."

Lissa pushed Egon slightly. He glanced at her, and she nodded. He got to his feet, clasping his hands nervously.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, "but I made the statement, during Councilman Ackroyd's speech, that I

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could prove Martians were human beings."

"An excellent diversion, too," Bendel put in.

"It wasn't a diversion. I meant it. Only what I *should* have said was that human beings are Martians."

There was a silence. Then Dhotal said, "I don't think we follow you, son."

Egon looked round at their intent faces. "Well, you know that we have not yet been able to read the Martian glyphs, the inscriptions they left on the walls of their ruins. Their descendants, the present native population, have no written language of their own and can't help us. Nor have we found more than a few carvings to give us an idea of what those ancient Martians were like, of their lives, or even their appearance. In a subterranean room beneath Gole's house, however, I found a series of well-preserved bas-reliefs.

"Before I tell you what they showed, I must go back a little. As some of you know, Professor Godwin, of Morna, was one of the first men to perform archaeological excavations on the Moon. Working with him, I became persuaded as he was that there might be a connection between the Martian ruins and one small cromlech we found but did not excavate on the Moon. I won't go into details, it isn't important, but in the end I was assigned to do some digging. I found a typical Martian chamber—we still have no idea what they were used for, or why these people with their high degree of technological skill chose to build in stone. But in that chamber, preserved in the lunar sand and airless climate, I found, among others, a single character which I could read. It had a carving above it—"

"Which you could read?" the Director of Tanggra interrupted. "I don't see how—"

"Sir," Egon said, "if you saw a drawing of a cross with a looped top—what is called a *crux ansata* —how would you interpret it?"

The Director pinched up his lower lip. "That would depend," he said. "It is generally regarded as a fertility emblem, meaning life."

"Exactly. And if you saw such a device, with a picture above it of a woman giving birth to a child, you would no longer be in doubt that that was its meaning. Right?"

"Is that what you found?" asked Mortimer.

"Yes. And almost at once I began to ask myself how on earth of all the possible arrangements of lines to make glyphs, the Martians had happened to choose precisely that one which is identical with the tau cross, or *crux ansata,* the symbol of life for so many peoples on our own planet.

"Now to get to what I found below Gole's house. It was, to begin with, a cylindrical well made not of stone but of some hard, shining substance. In a chamber next to

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this shaft I found an entire wall of carvings. These made clear that the shaft was a rocket launching well. And they also explained my glyph to me.

"The circle is a planet. And the cross is a winged ship, leaving that planet, flying—not as we'd draw a spaceship, *upward,* away from the sun, but *downward,* towards the sun. Towards our Earth, in short."

His audience sat utterly still. Egon thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and chuckled. "It may be damaging to our earthly pride," he said. "The fact is, the bas-reliefs show that those ancient Martians do not look like their present-day descendants on this planet. They look like us. To be precise, they look like Cro-Magnon man—"

"What?" exclaimed the Director, rising to his feet.

"Yes, Cro-Magnon, or Aurignacian man, who appeared suddenly and strangely in Europe countless ages ago and thrust aside Neanderthal man. We cannot altogether hope to fathom, certainly not without much more research, the aspirations and thinking of those remote Martian ancestors of ours. But they *were* our ancestors. I'm sure of it. They, too, wished to colonize other planets. Their method of colonization was to plant on our earth several hundreds of their people, armed only with fire and knowledge, to live as primitives.

"It's possible that they foresaw the degeneration of their race on Mars, the ultimate peaceful fading away of a people with too much leisure. We can see the same thing on Earth, among some of the more primitive peoples. No one has more leisure time than a man whose food lies ready to hand, whose climate is without extremes, and who has no natural enemies. But such men weaken, they fall an easy prey to unexpected illnesses, they lose their art, they never develop their science. Perhaps the Martians knew—and for this reason planted their colony to face great odds, to grow tough and adaptable. To become, at long last, men—natives—of Earth."

For a time, no one spoke. Then Ackroyd got wearily to his feet. "I'll have to go somewhere and lie down," he muttered. "It's too much for me to take in, all at once. First the attempt on me, and then this. Young man, you've wrecked my life."

He turned to the door. Bendel solicitously took his arm. At the door, he looked back and added, "Of course, you saved it, too. I'm grateful for that. But not as grateful as I ought to be."

Mortimer of the Guardianship, sighed. "It's all very strange," he said. "We shall have to authorize full-scale research at once. Meantime, Egon, please don't leave here. I'd like you to stay at Tanggra until we've made up the team. You'll go with it, of course. I'll take care of the arrangements."

Lissa stood up beside Egon. "It's

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fantastic," she said. "So we're Martians—all of us?"

He nodded. He could understand Ackroyd's feeling, for he himself was drained, tired beyond belief.

"I think I'd like a bite and a long sleep," he said. "It's—my God, it's twenty-four hours since I had anything to eat. No wonder I'm ragged."

Lissa said, "Wait. Last night you asked me a question. I'd like to answer it now."

He blinked at her. "A question? What was it?"

"You asked me whether I ever have dinner with anyone who isn't a secret agent."

She grinned, and took his arm. "Well, the answer is yes," she said.

PURPOSE OF EXPLORER IV

REPORTS ABOUT the latest satellite to be orbited by this country, launched as we were going to press, have stressed technical data and the perfection of the launching— "The rocket that bore the fourth Explorer toward space rose from its pad in a superb demonstration of the missile man's art." But, except that next morning, there has been not much emphasis on the admittedly less dramatic aims of the satellite.

Explorer IV is up there to make a precise analysis of what Explorers I and III discovered—the existence of a layer of powerful radiation in space. It is not known, incidentally, how thick this layer of radiation is. It may extend all the way to the sun.

This is not Explorer IV's problem, however. It is counting particles, measuring their energy, using four detector instruments to do this, one of the slender instruments being wrapped in a shield of lead, a sixteenth of an inch thick, partial protection from this radiation.

Vanguard I is measuring temperatures only. Explorer I and III were concerned with temperatures in space, the occurrence of micro-meteorites, and cosmic rays. Explorer IV, in view of the discoveries of the earlier satellites, has no equipment for study of temperature or micro-meteorites, but is concerned solely with this layer of radiation in space.

Its four instruments are two Geiger counters, one of them, as we've said, shielded with a thin layer of lead, and two scintillators. The four complement each other. The two Geiger counters are measuring the radiation inside the satellite, caused by the particles bombarding it on the outside. The sheathed one is measuring how much of this radiation will penetrate a protective coating. The scintillators are measuring the outside bombardment. One *measures* the total energy of the particles that hit it, while the other *counts* the particles that hit it, the combined result determining the force with which one particle hits.

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high style

by . . . Zelda Kessler

I felt sorry for the woman. She tried so hard and still it was hopeless. Try as she might, she couldn't succeed.

DURING the noon hour, I always took over the reception desk so that Helen could go to lunch. "I need a new dress," she said to me that day, "so I'm going to run over to Gimbel's and see if I can find something that'll look half-way decent on me."

"Go right ahead," I told her, "but don't be late coming back. I get hungry too, you know."

She stood up and gave her girdle a tug. She yawned and stretched, then stooping over she took her purse and make-up kit from the bottom drawer of the desk . . . and after another pull at her girdle, headed for the Ladies Room to re-do her face.

I watched her mince out the door, her dress full and bloused on top . . . taut and stretched and strained across her bottom. She would readily concede that she just wasn't built for the current fashions like some of us were. "These clothes, my dear, seem to be made for you," she'd say. "But *me* . . . on *me* they look terrible." Still, from the time they were first praised by an editor in *Mode,* she wore them. She found them awkward—she found them uncomfortable—but they were stylish, so, being a woman, she wore them.

Queens housewife Zelda Kessler returns with this provocative little short-short which asks a question of interest to husbands—who is responsible for some of these startling and different fashion changes? Who is it, really that decrees the new sack—or anti-sack—look? The designers? Or Them?

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It was a new century, the beginning of the twenty-first, and the era of the "Y" look in women's clothes. It had burst unexpectedly on the fashion world. It had been promoted relentlessly. And it had lasted long enough to set a fashion record on the earth.

I worked for Forward Fashions and our designer, Miss Barbara, had started this trend of the broad loose top and the slim, stalk-like skirt. She persuaded them to go all-out on the silhouette and now our concern was tops in the industry and she was considered the foremost designer in the country. Everyone else was just turning out copies and variations of the basic lines.

I enjoyed my work at Forward Fashions. Mostly, I did odd jobs and helped where I was needed. I spent part of my day posting bills for the bookkeeper. At twelve, as I said, I took over the switchboard and acted as a receptionist during Helen's lunch hour. When the showroom was very busy, I helped with the modeling. And if someone needed an errand run, I was generally available and always glad to be of service.

That morning I had taken a sketch of one of Miss Barbara's creations to the offices of the *What Women Will Wear*. The women who work there really like our stuff and always see to it that we get a big splash in their paper.

It's strange about a top fashion. Take the leading models and career women of today, they can wear these clothes beautifully. But there are others, girls like Helen, who happen to be built along different lines and tend to be rather big below the waist. I can never get over how they cling to whatever is considered the rage. They starve themselves and strap themselves in and try to confine their hips within a space meant for only half the mass. Then they wear padding to round out bosoms which have become emaciated through their dieting. They sigh and complain every time they go shopping for a dress, just as Helen was probably doing right now. Yet they follow the stream faithfully and they all buy the "Y" look.

It has gotten so that even the men forget that their women used to be built with hips that measured at least the same as the bust line and often a few inches more. They regard it as natural and beautiful that the prevailing bosom now registers a good four or five inches more than the hips.

Lunch hour is generally quite slow. A few fellows called asking me for dates. They know when I take over the switchboard, and they've gotten into the habit of ringing me up then. I took some messages for people who were out. Then there was a very special call for me . . . one I had been expecting. A friend of mine from back home was coming to town and I was to see that she got a job and help with any adjustments she might have to make.

I couldn't leave the reception desk, so I rang Miss Barbara's office

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and had a hasty conference with her. Dear Miss Barbara, she had done so much for all of us. I remember how scared I was when I had first come to this strange noisy city, and how she had taken me under her wing and shown me the ropes, so to speak. She made a place for me and helped me to fit in till I really felt as if I belonged.

Now there would be another newcomer who must be made to feel at home. Miss Barbara quickly went over the procedure. I knew what had to be done and a lengthy explanation was unnecessary. Helen would simply have to go.

The boss came out of the showroom. He stopped at the desk to tell me that he would be back in a couple of hours and he left a phone number where he could be reached if necessary. I told him that a friend of mine was looking for work and got him to promise to consider her for the first opening that would come along. Of course, he didn't know how soon that would be.

As the hands of the clock moved toward one, I turned my chair slightly, so I could look out the window and watch for Helen. Have you ever seen the lunch-hour crowds on the streets of the garment district? I really had to concentrate for fear I might miss her. Soon I spotted her waiting for the light to change, so she could cross the street. She looked flushed and disheveled from shopping and trying on dresses during the past hour. She clutched a package in her hand so she must have found something she liked, though it probably fit her as poorly as the rest of her clothes. Poor Helen!

I drew out the slim tube which I always kept ready in my pocket. It looked like a lipstick case, but it had never held any lipstick. It was our only weapon, we needed no other. I forced myself to control my trembling. There must be no error. Carefully, I took aim and Helen vanished completely—the box she was carrying and all. At the same moment, the light changed and the crowd surged across the street completely unaware of the fact that one of their number was missing. We had learned through experience that the safest disintegration was accomplished in a crowd. People quickly push in to fill up an empty space.

Tomorrow someone in Helen's family might report her absence to the Bureau of Missing Persons, but one of my friends will take the message and misplace it. The girls there are so efficient at juggling figures the authorities see no statistics which might arouse their suspicions.

The first part of my assignment had been carried out. I was getting hungry, so I called up the luncheonette and asked them to send up a ham on rye and a container of coffee. There'd be no chance to go out for lunch now. During the rest of the day I would have to do Helen's job as well as mine. And I had to get things ready so that when the new girl showed up tomorrow she could step in with a minimum

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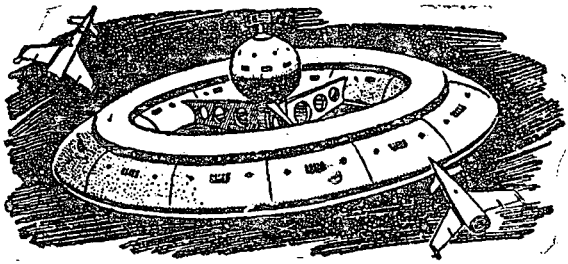
of difficulty. She would be in my charge, just as I was in Miss Barbara's. She had received the same type of training we all had in language, customs, manners, etc. She would be pretty much prepared for life here. Still it's hard on us to leave our home and get adjusted to the ways of this strange distant world.

Our own planet has such a surplus of women, that the Council decided the only solution was emigration. They chose this place because the physical conditions here are almost like those at home. Fortunately, we are built enough like the native women to be completely accepted.

The only difference between us is the slight matter of our proportions. A good knowledge of public relations and fashions helped us get around that. We even seem to be more attractive to the men here than the indigenous females like Helen.

We're naturally sorry we have to dispose of anyone, but we had only two choices. We could take the planet in an all-out war, or we could gradually replace the female population. The latter is so much more preferable, with the casualties limited to the other side. . . .



MORE ABOUT THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN

CONSTANTLY RECURRING reports from Nepal, from expeditions penetrating into the Gobi Desert, and from Soviet scientists returned from missions (one assumes) to some of the Atomic Research centers in Tannu Tuva and Mongolia, seem to add up to the probability that neanderthal-type ape-men are still living in the deserts of central Mongolia—and perhaps elsewhere. Crediting the findings to a Mongolian scientist identified as Professor Rinchev, a Professor B. Porshnev is quoted as saying that these ape-men of Mongolia "very much resemble human beings, but their bodies are covered with thin reddish-black hair through which their skin can be seen." (Keep in mind, here, the appearance of the Yeti, seen in the Himalayas.) "They are a more primitive form of ape-man which has developed on a purely animal level."

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homecoming

by . . . Lee Correy and Joseph Wesley

Inanimate things had been friendlier than the people around him during the past five crowded useless years.

Back from beyond the sky they came—the explorers, the adventurers, the men who, with courage and curiosity, had probed far beyond the envelope of the world. Back they came, some to go again . . . but some to stay . . .

"HAD enough, eh?"

Gil Jascomb glanced briefly at the disbursing officer. He didn't reply. The rows of ribbons on the officer's tunic told him the man was a deep spacer. *He wouldn't understand,* Gil thought.

"Well, you've certainly got a pile of cash coming," the officer went on as he swung open the heavy safe-door, took out a cash box, and lifted the lid. "You civilian scientists really stack it away while you're out there. Sure you don't want it in a check?" Again, Gil made no answer. The officer shrugged, then started carefully counting out the slips of green paper. "Fifty . . . sixty . . . seventy thousand. There you are. Don't spend it all in one place."

Gil finally spoke humorlessly as he stuffed the money into his pouch. "Don't worry. I gave five years of my life for it."

Working with the planning staff at White Sands Proving Ground, rocket engineer Lee Correy participated in hundreds of rocket firings, including the record-breaking Aerobee-Hi research rockets. Well known in SF, he is also the author of considerable material on rocketry and astronautics.

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"Uh . . . Maybe it's none of my business, son, but it isn't healthy to walk around Bonneville or Deseret with that much cash in your pouch. How about letting me put it in the safe for you . . . at least until the banks open tomorrow morning?"

But Jascomb had turned on his heel and left.

Outside the building, dusk was falling over the great white expanse of Bonneville Spaceport. Silhouetted against the sky were the distant mountains, dark purple in the fading light. Above them, the clouds were celebrating the final sunlight in a blaze of red and gold. Jascomb stopped, lifting his eyes to look at the scene. Then he filled his lungs with the sweet, pungent air of his mother planet.

Home again. Home. Earth solid underfoot, still warm from the rays of the sun. Far hills painted in the last unrestrained colors of day. Sky overhead, sky with clouds and movement and colors and rain. Wind to push against him. And the horizons from whence the wind came, stretching far beyond the reach of his hand. He felt a wave of relief and freedom wash over him.

Five years had been too long, he thought. Too long a time to keep a man away. First there had been those useless, lax, eternal hours—thousands of them—in the ships. Then those timeless hours, strung together endlessly—more thousands of them—with no night, no day, no horizon beyond the circling walls, no colors except the monotonous sheen of steel. And the press of men. Men everywhere, pushing and crowding—the same ones hour after hour, the still form sleeping ten inches over your head as you lay in your own cramped bunk ten inches over another head, the same faces across the tiny table with its tasteless food, the same voices reverberating from the hard walls.

Everywhere there had been people—associates, assistants, acquaintances—but no friends. Never did he have a moment by himself to think, to disassociate himself from the press of his work. Only in his work did he think with assistants to aid him in adjusting his cameras, reading his spectroscopes, and operating his calculators—inanimate things more friendly than the people around him.

And there was no escape. Outside there was only the swollen sun, forever hanging in the sky, driving its heat through the walls of the dome. "Outside" meant the shimmering plains of the planet Mercury where no man could live, even in a spacesuit, for more than thirty minutes. But thirty minutes, Gil sometimes thought, of being alone.

For him there had been only his experiments. He had felt alive only when he was working. But now he had to forget that work, even the near-success of his last experiments. In four years of intense study and

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observation, Gil had discovered some very unusual and apparently reproducible aspects of the Solar Phoenix reaction, the continuous, cyclic process by which the sun maintains its steady radiation and renews its energy. It was a beautiful thing to Gil, and the ancient dream of harnessing it had once seemed to be within his grasp. But his dream of endless cheap power for mankind had faded as the calculators, operated by the fact-demanding nuclear statisticians—almost faceless bodies in the crowd around him—had told him that the pilot model he had lovingly constructed on paper would operate . . . if he built it on Mercury.

Nobody wanted to build it on Earth. There was a 73% chance that it would detonate and take the planet with it . . . within a year.

There would be no new era for mankind.

And now it was over. The fervor of probing into the secrets of Old Sol had slowly died under the dimmer but more insistent, more relentless ceiling lights, constantly burning . . . and the knowledge that he had given men only the means of turning a planet into a small star.

He pulled his thoughts from the crowded dome on Mercury back to Earth, letting his gaze fall away from the sky until the slender silhouettes of the ships came into view, standing starkly against the dying color of the clouds. Huge floodlights were already beginning to expel night from the spaceport, dimming the clear outlines of the mountains and casting glaring circles of light on the white salt. Ant-like creatures moved in the lights—men preparing the ships for their lonely journeys into the sky.

A low mutter escaped Gil's lips. He lowered his head and walked on without so much as another glance.

Days later found Gil walking again, still trying to find peace in the solitude of Earth, this time in contemplation of the heaving sea.

"Hello, Gil. I'd been hoping I'd find you."

Jascomb discovered he had almost sprawled over a hard-faced man in his fifties who was seated on the sand before him. Gil recognized the man and started to turn, ready to walk away. Then he turned back, stifling a second impulse to speak sharply, to indicate he was alone and wanted to remain alone. That would be discourteous, however, and his deep respect for the man forbade it.

"Hello, Doctor," he said at last in a flat tone which was neither cordial nor sharp.

Doctor Kniele looked entirely relaxed. "Why not sit down, Gil?" he asked. "It's a beautiful evening to watch the sea."

Gil hesitated. Finally he said, "It is at that," and settled himself on the sand. He did not express surprise at the fact that he had found his former chief scientist on

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this lonely stretch of beach in Baja California.

They sat in silence for minutes, watching the wheeling gulls and hearing their cries, observing the smash of breakers on the rocks, and listening to the soft brush of water on the sandy crescent of the inlet. Finally Kniele folded his hands around his knees. Other silent minutes passed before he spoke quietly, his gaze on the far horizon, "The sea . . . the home of life . . . the great cradle of the Earth . . . now exulting in Aeschylean laughter, now spasmodic, sinister, terrible, and never so terrible as when it is calm, or inviting mortals to sport with it, smiling—as though it were forgetful of the rotting ships and sunken treasure and the drowned far down that were for a time regarded curiously by monsters of the deep . . .' "

There was a haze on the distant horizon where the ocean met the sky. A brisk breeze whipped a nearby patch of water to whitecaps and sent spray flying.

"Why were you looking for me?" Gil asked suddenly.

"Did I say I was?" Kniele pulled down the sleeves of his old sweater as a precaution against the cool, wet breeze.

"I didn't live with you for five years without learning something about you, Doctor. Sometimes actions do not demand explanations."

Kniele smiled wryly and drew a scrawl in the sand with his finger. "Which all goes to prove that no man can really know another." He glanced up. "As a matter of fact, I'm here on my vacation. But it doesn't surprise me a bit to find we both picked the same spot . . . and I did mean to look you up soon . . ."

"I'm on permanent vacation . . . for awhile." Gil removed his glasses, wiped them on his shirt, and replaced them in their proper spot astride his thin nose.

"So? You'll tire of it."

"I'll never tire of this again." Jascomb had turned his attention back to the sea.

"What of the Phoenix reactor? Doesn't it interest you now?" Kniele inquired in an off-hand way.

"No."

"No?"

"Go ahead and make a planetary nova . . . if that's what they want you to do. I don't give a damn if I never hear of it again."

It was the doctor's turn to remain silent for a minute while the screech of gulls drifted on the wind. "I'm afraid I don't really understand you, Gil. You were the most accomplished solar physicist I've ever seen. You were once excited about the structure and operation of the sun . . . so excited that you begged me to let you go along on the Mercury expedition. I had the physical and psych tests waived for you, Gil, because I thought you could help us learn something. You did. We've got a design for the Phoenix reactor, a little glob of gadgetry which puts an ordinary nuclear reactor to

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shame. We can put that gadgetry together, Gil, and we will. But there are problems . . ."

Jascomb remained silent.

"I don't mean to pry into your private affairs, Gil . . . but what do you intend to do with the rest of your life? You've resigned from the Bureau of Research. You've renounced your studies. You've thrown your talent and training away. Why, Gil? What really happened?"

Gil didn't look at him. He didn't take his eyes from the sea. So quietly that Kniele had to strain to hear his voice over the wind, he replied, "I used to lie there in my bunk at Mercury Prime Base, listening to the noises of people sleeping all around me. I used to count the welds and rivets in the bulkhead at my shoulder, or stare at the glow tube that never went out. I used to try to think of a way to make the Phoenix reactor safe . . . but I couldn't. It got so bad I couldn't even think at all. I spent my time trying to remember the earth and the sky . . . and what it's like to stretch out your arms without running them into something. I used to try to remember what it was like to *live* instead of being canned in a big steel drum. That's why I'm back. That's why I'm here right now. And that's why I'm never going back out again."

"Because of that? Nothing else?"

The edge of the sun touched the line of the horizon, its crimson disc flattened and distorted by the atmosphere. "No . . . Maybe it was partly because I had no privacy at all . . . Maybe it was because I sometimes wanted to be alone without that flaming thing in the sky." He stretched his arms wide. "Maybe it was because I hated crowds around me, every minute of the day."

"You were just lonely, Gil," Kniele observed quietly. During five years the doctor had watched Gil. He knew the man could be desperately lonely in a crowd, unable to share his thoughts and feelings, unable to join in the necessary camaraderie of those who are thrown together on the edge of nowhere. "You knew, of course, that we're planning to take women and married couples along on the next one? As a matter of fact, a great deal of our cargo capacity will be taken up with additional quarters for them . . ."

"Doctor, that doesn't affect me in the least, because I won't be there. When my seventy thousand is gone, I won't complain. I'm seeing home right now. After I've rediscovered what sky and clouds and mountains are, I'll start again —at the bottom of the heap if I have to. And if I'm lonely, I've learned to live with it."

Kniele turned to face him. "Gil, you can't do it! You can't afford to! Why, everybody's talking about your work on the Phoenix reactor. You have the chance to find yourself on top of the heap *right now*! With your background, you're

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needed! You can't just walk out, Gil! Snap out of it, man!"

That sudden unexpected outburst from the most respected person in his life was too much for Jascomb. He got to his feet and spoke softly.

"Go to hell."

Then he walked off down the beach.

Kniele rose smoothly to his feet and strolled beside him, his hands thrust deep in his pockets. For a time he was silent. Then he resumed as if there had been no interruption, "Gil, you've given us the Phoenix reactor, the biggest advance in nucleonics since the fusion reactor. I was *not* just making talk when I said we needed you. That reactor has to be controlled. It *can* be controlled. I know it, and so do you. But we need your help to solve it, Gil . . . You know more about it than any other man. Please, Gil, come back!"

Gil trudged stolidly on, oblivious to the words at his side.

"I won't be seeing you again, Gil. I got a special dispensation to come see you and tell you about the next expedition. I would have been looking you up within a week . . ." With the young scientist still silent, Kniele went on in lower tones, "You're not working for the Space Force any longer, Gil, but that doesn't mean you can talk about where you've been or what you've done. This thing is too dangerous. If the word gets out, you'll be the first suspect. I'm warning you, Gil, because I'm not angry with you. I find it impossible to be angry. I can only feel sorry for you . . ." The doctor suddenly stopped walking and stood watching the lanky form trudge on down the beach.

The Kaibab forest on the north rim of the Grand Canyon is unbelievably lush. Gil found release in walking through the halls of ponderosa, the groves of aspen and fir, and the broad high-altitude meadows. But he spent most of his time gazing out across the immensity of the Canyon, feeling the emotions of every human who has ever seen it.

Yet one thought kept returning to disturb him. Not of Mercury Prime Base nor of the Phoenix reactor. It was the remembrance of Kniele's words, "You were just lonely, Gil . . ."

Lonely? Perhaps he had been. Lonely from that first day in elementary school when he discovered that he could not, for some reason, bring himself to ally with one of the groups which most boys quickly formed. Lonely from the time he watched from the sidelines at his first high school dance. Lonely from the time he stood apart watching his fellow freshmen at college join their fraternities and clubs.

For him, only the cold, lifeless, exciting knowledge of science had been his friend.

It was still early morning when he left his cabin at Bright Angel Lodge to walk out to the point, hoping that the ageless gorges and

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pinnacles of the Canyon would help him with the answer to his problem.

The path was steep and rocky where it had been cut through the Kaibab limestone by ranger work parties. A few inches from his feet the Canyon fell away into thousands of feet of color and shapes. On this edge of nothing, trees and shrubs and wild flowers still maintained precarious foothold.

Life is tenacious, he thought. *Just to exist at all, it takes the greatest risks . . .* Perhaps, he mused, life takes joy in just *being,* in sprinkling itself on the face of a world for a moment before it withers.

As he neared the tip of the point, he saw someone sitting alone on a rock poised on the very edge of the chasm. He turned to go back, but the thought came to him, *Perhaps life needs other life. Perhaps it should not be alone.* Sharing this immensity of beauty could not spoil nor diminish it.

The canyon breeze played with her auburn hair and with the colorful skirt wrapped around her knees.

This happens only in the "movies," he thought. But why not in real life? He hesitated, then started to climb toward her. *Just once . . . just for the experiment . . .*

He didn't say anything, but climbed up on the rock and sat down, not near enough to touch her, yet not far enough to lose the effect of her presence. Then she turned to look at him, disturbed by his approach. And his heart sank. A plain, ordinary face with no striking beauty. A pair of mobile lips, neither lascivious nor ruby-red. A pair of dark eyes which neither smoldered nor sparkled, but only questioned.

For a moment she seemed about to speak, then she looked away. She took no further notice of him, and as he watched he quickly realized that she had forgotten him.

Then her eyes took on a new light, her lips parting slightly and her head tilting almost imperceptibly. He realized suddenly that she was listening to something in the apparent silence of the great vastness below them. He, too, listened . . . and he heard it, a sound climbing the canyon walls from a thousand feet below. Strangely, he found himself answering her unspoken question, "That's Roaring Springs down in the bottom of the draw."

She listened for a moment longer, then remarked, "I know. Bright Angel Lodge gets its power and water from there."

"You'd think they'd use a reactor these days."

"Why? Nature shaped this place. She can keep it going, even without the instrusion of men. Why bother with man-made power when Nature has it here for the asking? Men sometimes try to change things too much."

He wanted to tell her that he had tried to contribute to that change, but he remembered Kniele's

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warning and kept silent. Besides, Mercury Prime Base and the Phoenix reactor were a long way off and a long time ago . . . or so it seemed. "Have you seen the Canyon before?"

"Oh, yes! I come here often." She looked out at the color-banded spires and buttresses, her mobile face registering pleasure and awe simultaneously. "I like it because I cannot believe it. It's obviously impossible . . ."

"It is impossible at that." Gil discovered, for the first time, that he had no trouble talking. "To believe in anything, I've always had to measure it, to count it, to see its physical effect on other things . . ."

"You speak as a physicist, sir." A smile played around the corners of her mouth, transforming her.

"I am . . . or I was." He let it go at that.

She smiled again. "It was obvious," she said and turned to look out at the gorge.

They did not speak for nearly half an hour. Having stepped through a door he had never entered before, Gil felt neither remorse nor elation. He wanted to talk some more, but feared to break the mood as though words would shatter the incredible scene before them, sending its towers and walls crashing down to form a featureless plain.

Together they returned to the Lodge in silence, and she went her own way to her cabin. It was only after Gil had entered his own cabin to wash for lunch that he realized he had never asked her name.

His heart was in his throat when he went down to the dining room. He was afraid she would not be there, and yet afraid he wouldn't know what to do or say if she was. The polite, handsome, college-boy headwaiter started to lead the way through the tables with their babble of people when Gil saw her. Unaware that he had left the guidance of the headwaiter, he stepped up to her table and sat down. "Do you mind?"

"Not at all. I didn't mind on the Point, did I?"

He introduced himself in hesitating and apologetic tones. Her name, he found out, was as plain as she had seemed at first—Edith Miller. He was not disappointed; any exotic-sounding name would not have fitted her.

Jascomb was never able to understand what happened to him after that. He did not exactly enjoy Edith's presence, yet he found himself with her. During the next four days, on walks through the Kaibab forest, during evening entertainments by the summer-employed college help at the Lodge, even during the mule trip to the bottom of the Canyon which he would never have taken by himself, he found that being with her was almost as natural to him as being alone.

She had not pried into his private self since he had dropped the matter on the Point. But one evening, as they were watching the

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sunset from the stone porch of the Lodge, she observed, "Gil, have you ever noticed how the tourists look at this place?"

"Huh? No. Is it significant?"

"I think so. Some view it with awe, some with idle curiosity, some with no understanding even of beauty. Some glance at it, then rush to buy postcards to prove they were here. Do you know how you watch it?"

He smiled. "How?"

"You observe everything—the Canyon, the clouds, the animals, the flowers—as though you were wistfully watching old friends. Or are you making new acquaintances?" She seemed only half expecting an answer.

"I'm still in the process of remembering."

She looked at him. "Where have you been, Gil?" she asked quietly.

Speak! Tell her! Yet, forbidden to, he remained silent for a moment. He would have to answer, this he knew. "Where? . . . Where there was nothing like this. Five years where there was nothing, on a . . . on an island . . ."

"An island without sky? Or clouds? Or plants under your feet? You greet each of those like a new friend, Gil."

"I can't tell . . ." He paused, then went on, "I don't want to talk about it, Edith. I . . . I was away on a . . . an island, doing something because it was the only thing I knew how to do . . . and the only thing I wanted to do. I thought I'd created something . . . but it turned out to be monstrous. The only thing I can do is forget it and try to remember and rediscover the things that were not on that island . . ."

He thought he detected a surprised look on Edith's face, a momentary freezing of expression and action. Once again he noticed how plain her face was without expression. Then the usual play of emotion returned to it. Was it compassion he saw there? Was she telling him she felt sorry for him? Gil had learned little of her, but he did know that behind her plain features was a quick mind . . . and more. Much more. It was not pity nor tolerance he saw, but a warmth and compassion that met him on equal level. She seemed to exude a quiet joy in being alive in a universe filled with wonder and zeal, a joy that he seemed to share for the first time. She was, he knew, totally unlike any person he had met before. Somehow, he felt his barriers of fear and doubt go down before her.

Edith was not at breakfast in the dining room the next morning. Almost in panic, Gil managed to gulp his meal. Then his long legs got in each other's way as he hurried up to her cabin.

The door was open. The maid looked up at him in mild surprise.

"Where's Miss Miller?" he demanded to know.

The girl looked at him blankly.

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"The woman who had this cabin," he repeated, "where has she gone?"

He got an answer that time, confirmed by a hasty check at the lobby desk. Edith had left.

There was only one way she could have gone. The only way in or out was by car along a single highway forty miles to Jacob Lake. Without bothering to get his bags or check out, Gil leaped in his car.

He was not, by nature, a fast driver. Yet he quickly learned how to corner his car at high speeds on the winding road. The ranger at the park gate did not try to stop him as the car streaked past. Down the long slope of the Kaibab Plateau Gil went, ignoring the oncoming traffic, searching only for an unknown car with a single occupant.

Thirty miles out, he caught her. But she would not stop in spite of his insistent honking. Gil was not sure how to force a car to stop, but he tried.

It was sloppy. They tangled fenders, but he stopped her. And he was out of breath as he pulled his car off the road, jumped out, and ran up to her open window. "Edith! Why did you leave without telling me?"

She was white and shaking. "Please, Gil . . . Why did you have to scare me like that?"

"You wouldn't stop . . . and I had to see you." He opened the car door and took her arm. "Come sit down. You're in no shape to drive now."

Edith allowed him to lead her down the bank and into the cool shade of a grove of towering ponderosa.

He set her down on the soft carpet of fallen needles, then sat facing her. "Edith, why did you do it? Why didn't you tell me where you were going? What did I do? What did I say?"

She held her face in her hands, trying to calm herself. "I didn't think you would care, Gil . . ."

"I didn't think I would, either . . . until you weren't there." He had trouble believing that he had acted as he had without logic or reason.

"Gil," Edith said, raising her head to look at him, "when I met you, I didn't know. I should have guessed from what you said and the way you acted that you are the Gilbert Jascomb who developed the Phoenix reactor."

Coming from her, those words were absolutely impossible. That information was a closely guarded secret, a dangerous secret. "How . . . Where did you find out about that?"

"I wasn't supposed to tell anybody," Edith said as tears appeared in her eyes. "When I was assigned to the project a month ago, Doctor Kniele told us what we would be doing with the Phoenix reactor out on Mercury . . ."

"*You're* going to Mercury Prime Base? Why?"

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"Kniele has got to make the Phoenix reactor work."

"But . . . *you*!"

"They're taking married couples . . . and women, Gil. I've handled nuclear reactors all over the world. I'm a qualified mathematician . . ." She dropped her face in her hands again. "I wasn't supposed to tell anybody . . . not even you. Kniele said you were outside of the project . . . the only man in the world who might be able to work out a method to prevent it from detonating a planet . . ."

"Oh, he did, eh? Look, do you know how dangerous that damned thing is?"

"Very definitely. I've worked out the statistics on it."

"Well, I'm not going to let you go out there alone . . ."

"Gil, you can't get back on the project. Your chance is gone now; the lists are made up, and, besides, Doctor Kniele had to pull strings to get you on the last trip. He wouldn't be able to convince the authorities again . . . not now. And we'll be leaving Bonneville in a week."

"Very low probability," Gil remarked curtly as he got to his feet and ran to his car. Extracting a note pad from the glove compartment, he returned and sat down beside Edith. He started to cover the pad with figures, speaking to her as he did so, "Edith, I don't know if I love you. I don't think I'm capable of loving anybody. I operate with a gross ignorance of human beings and what makes them tick. But I'm willing to learn—if I can —what love is." His words fell over each other, so rapidly did he talk as his pencil flew across one sheet of paper and started on another. He had wanted to talk for a long time—for a lifetime—but he had never found anyone he had wanted to talk to. The fear he'd had—the fear he still had—it didn't matter now. "I'll be honest with you and honest with myself for probably the first time. I don't know my own self; I'm proving that right now. I don't understand life any better . . ."

"You don't have to understand life," she remarked softly, watching the marks he put on the paper. "You just have to be glad of it, that's all. Love grows from that. To be honest, I'm not sure I love you either. I have loved all of life so much that I've never loved a single portion of it more than the rest . . . No, Gil, you didn't make that transformation properly . . ."

"So I didn't." Hurriedly, he scratched through it and kept going. "Well, maybe we can both learn. Are you willing to try?"

"How can we? I have to leave in a week . . . alone."

"As I said before, very low probability. Are you willing to try?" he repeated as his pencil danced over another page, filling it with diagrams this time.

Her expression didn't change as she nodded. Gil didn't see her nod, but he didn't need to.

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Edith pointed at the paper, indicating a diagram she did not understand. "Gil . . . for Heaven's sake, *what* are you doing there?"

"Kniele won't have to worry about the Phoenix reactor any longer," he remarked as he completed his figuring, tore the sheets from the pad, and looked at them. "He was right when he said I knew how to make it reliable and safe. But I didn't know it . . . consciously, at any rate. Maybe my subconscious had to chew on it while I took a rest. Anyway, who cares? Here's the answer. Nobody's going to have to go out to an isolated base and kill himself trying to make it work. Any technician can make the necessary changes right here on Earth."

If Edith was amazed by this sudden display of strange thought processes, she didn't show it. "But . . . Gil, are you *sure* it can never go to the critical point?"

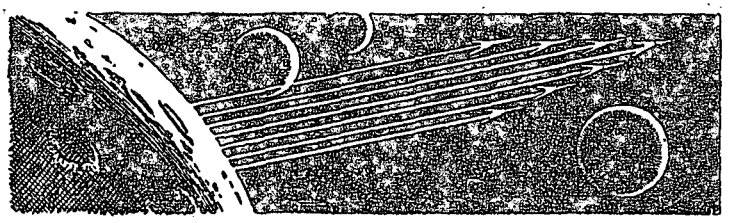
He handed her the papers. "Check it yourself if you want. It's all there, and I know it's right. But let's get it to Kniele. You can read it over while I'm driving. Come on."

"Back to the Lodge?" asked Edith as she got to her feet.

"No. Bonneville Spaceport."

"But we'll be coming back to the Canyon, won't we? At least, tradition says we must go somewhere," she pointed out.

"Ah, tradition. I wasn't aware of it." Gil grinned. "I guess we will be coming back at that."



REAL ESTATE BROKER ON THE MOON

A WOMAN WHO IS a real estate broker in Downey, California, wrote recently to the State Division of Real Estate:

"Enclosed please find $1.00. I wish to be the first to apply for a branch office on the moon. My children insist this will come in my time. It is hard to believe, but I want to be ready."

Real Estate Commissioner F. W. Griesinger is described as having decided that—pending annexation of all or part of the moon's surface to the State of California—the real estate broker's application for permission to open a branch office would be filed under "Moonbeams." . . . .

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nerves

by . . . Christopher Anvil

There is a strange theory that Martians are incapable of emotions such as those we have. This is not true.

THE Martian paused at the doorway and looked in. Bathed in the light of Mars' two moons, he saw her, locked in the arms of the Earthman. Her face was that of his wife. He turned, and his tall slender form moved away from the building, casting two shadows in the light of the moons.

He saw the Earthman next at breakfast. But before he saw him, he saw his wife. And she did not come to breakfast.

"Where's Rita?" asked the Earthman.

"Reeta is indisposed," said the Martian pleasantly. "Perhaps she will go with us to the spaceport, but I cannot tell. When she wakes with a headache, it sometimes lasts all day."

"Too bad," said the Earthman. He tapped absently on the bare wood of the table.

"Here," said the Martian, holding out a dish of curled reddish flakes, "do you like *berra* meat?"

"No. Thanks, I don't care for any." The Earthman frowned. "Rita said she'd be here for breakfast."

"Ah?" said the Martian. "Where did she say that?"

There has been a good deal of speculation about the identity of Christopher Anvil. Suffice it that his stories have appeared in most of the magazines, and in Playboy *(under another name), that he likes chess, lives in the country (in New York State), and was practically snowed under, he reports, this winter.*

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The Earthman opened his mouth and closed it. He had been about to say, "Last night."

"The reason I ask," said the Martian, taking a curl of *berra* meat delicately in his finger, "is because of Reeta's extraordinary memory. We Martians do not make a statement of future intent, and then not carry it out. It is a point of courtesy with us. Surely you know this."

"That's right," said the Earthman, remembering.

"Therefore, if she said she would be here, even with a headache she would be here. With myself," the Martian shook his head regretfully, "it is often different. My memory is often at fault." He crunched the *berra* meat with relish.

"I think I would like some of that," said the Earthman. He took some of the meat. "I guess I was wrong about Rita. I probably heard her wrong."

"Most probably," said the Martian.

The Earthman looked at him intently, but the thin Martian face was pleasant. "You know," said the Earthman, "it's been pleasant here. Before I left home, I didn't know. You hear so many stories about Martians. You know, about how tricky and subtle Martians are. But what the heck, Martians are just like anyone else." He smiled a sudden secret smile. "Yes, sir, just *exactly* like anyone else. Taller and thinner, is all." He took a handful of the *berra* meat and crunched loudly. "—Good stuff," he said.

The Martian winced faintly, then smiled. "Yes, it is surprising We have much the same physical form, much the same mental capacity. There is probably more variation among two races on Earth than between Earth and Mars. We can eat the same food and have the same diseases. It is surprising."

"Sure is," said the Earthman. He settled back and signaled to the manservant for some more of the strange mint-flavored coffee.

The Martian was leaning back, smoking an aromatic cigarette. His eyes looked into the distance as he spoke. "Yes, it is strange, the similarity in us. The same emotions. —Love, hate, jealousy. Tempered, perhaps, a little more by the passage of time and the aging of the race. Carried out, perhaps, a little more in the sphere of the mind than in that of the body. We are the same in body, though."

"Yes," the Earthman put in, grinning with half of his face.

"Yes," agreed the Martian, still looking off into space. He breathed out twin plumes of the aromatic smoke. "There is, however, a danger there, which we so far have held in check.

"What's that?"

"Disease." The Martian's hawk-like eyes touched impersonally on the Earthman and then glanced away.

"Why's that?" asked the Earth-

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man, feeling strangely chilled. "What about disease?"

The Martian hesitated. "Well," he said finally, "we are an older race." He ground out his cigarette.

"So?" said the Earthman. "What of it?"

"Diseases which have become benign in us, due to an immunity acquired over the ages, might become virulent in your race."

"Oh. We haven't got the immunity yet. But, our scientists—"

The Martian rose. "We must not stay chatting till you miss your ship. Excuse me a moment." He left the room and the Earthman heard him speaking in low, considerate tones, but could not make out the words.

"Reeta is still sick," said the Martian coming back into the room. "It is one of her headaches. She will be over it tomorrow. I asked her of her promise to be with us this morning. She remembered nothing of it. —Curious."

"My mistake," said the Earthman, laughing a little unnaturally.

The Martian shrugged. "My own mistake as well. If we had not gone to the fireshow last night, she would have no headache, and be with us today. Oh well, let us go. I have had Fernand see to your goods. You have the contract with you, I suppose?"

The Earthman frowned, patted his breast pocket absently and heard the crinkle of paper. He accompanied the Martian through the short central hall with its latticed screen to the outside. The air was brisk but the sun was warm.

"A pleasant day," said the Martian. "A little hot, perhaps." He crossed to the peculiar, many-wheeled vehicle the Martians used for traveling, and slid up a door. He motioned the Earthman in, then sat down beside him. The machine jolted into motion and something clattered to the floor.

"What's this?" said the Earthman, picking up a small metal disc. He accidentally touched a stud, and it flew open, showing a small blue-tinted mirror, and something that looked like rouge.

The Martian glanced over at it. "Reeta's compact," he said. "I suppose she forgot it at the fireshow last night. Your women use those too, don't they?"

"Yes," said the Earthman, frowning. The fireshow. They had offered to take him there. That is, his host had offered to. But he had thought that he saw something else in the eyes of his hostess, something far more worthwhile than the fireshow. He had said he thought he would go to bed, since he had to leave the next day. He had seen the promise in Rita's eyes. And she had kept that promise. Then how could his host talk of the fireshow? Rita could not be two places at once.

The vehicle was crawling forward at what the Martians considered a good speed. The Martian was admiring the scenery. "Beau-

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tiful," he was saying. "This is the best time of the year."

"Yes," said the Earthman. "Uh, about the fireshow. What time was that last night?"

"As always, at midnight," said the Martian. "Are you regretting that you missed it?"

"Sort of," said the Earthman. He was thinking that it had been shortly before midnight when he went for his short walk. She had been waiting at the flowering shrubs. They had gone back together, wordlessly. Midnight. This was impossible. "How long did the show last?"

"About three hours," said his host. "We didn't stay to see the end, though. We'd only been there an hour-and-a-half when Reeta complained of a pain over her eyes. The fireshow will do that to some people, you know."

But the Earthman was staring out the window. They passed a small Martian house surrounded by flowers. Rita, looking strangely pale, was standing among the flowers, putting some in a slender vase. She waved good-bye. "Why, there's Rita!" cried the Earthman.

His host turned slowly and glanced back. He shook his head. "I tell you frankly," he said, "I am glad you are leaving."

The Earthman stared at him.

"That," said the Martian, "was not Reeta. You may have noticed the difference in complexion."

"Why, she *was* pale. But, who was it?"

"I have never told you. Perhaps I should have. That was Reeta's twin."

The Earthman felt as if his head were spinning. "Why didn't I ever meet her?"

"It is a story I do not want to get out. You must agree not to tell."

"Well, sure, if you want me to."

"Very well. Reeta's sister, is well, somewhat wanton. She was brought up with her sister, they are like each other in appearance, but Neena had some unfortunate experiences as a girl. She is overly friendly with men."

"Oh." It crossed the Earthman's mind that perhaps the mixup about the fireshow was not so strange after all. "Well," he said, "I won't repeat it."

"It was not that that I wished you not to repeat." The Martian was looking straight ahead at the road.

"Oh? What was it, then?"

The Martian seemed to speak with some difficulty. "On Earth, you have the common cold, as it is called. We are, you know, immune to that here."

"Yes, I've heard that."

"You may not have heard that we have other diseases which are to us as your common cold is to you. They are irritating while they last, but they pass and we, with our acquired immunity, recover. While they last, however, we must avoid contact with Earthmen. The diseases are more violent with them."

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A chill seemed to have entered the vehicle.

"Neena," the Martian went on, "came down with a mild case of one of these Martian colds. This was what I did not tell you. Perhaps I should have. Suppose you had chanced to come down this way, and she in her thoughtless carelessness had spoken to you?" The Martian shivered.

"What," asked the Earthman hollowly, "did she have?"

"I do not know the name. My memory is not good. On Earth it produces sores—hideous. I have even been told limbs drop off."

Terrified, the Earthman sat up straight.

The Martian glanced at him. "Come," he said comfortingly. "Relax yourself. She will get over it. It is not so severe here. I told you, with us it is like a cold. But you see, I do not wish this to get around. Our trade with Earth is mutually profitable. A misunderstanding on this could ruin it."

"Yes," said the Earthman in a haunted voice. "You don't—you don't remember the name of this disease?"

"Ah, my memory is not too good. Reeta would know. It is a shame she could not come. —Headaches are not catching."

"That's good to know," said the Earthman. "Look, this 'cold'—would a person from Earth be likely to catch it? I mean—the odds?"

"We have not experimented," said the Martian dryly. He swung the many-wheeled vehicle onto the edge of the landing field. "I must leave you here. It has been a pleasure having you, my friend. I hope the contract will be satisfactory to everyone."

"Yes," said the Earthman faintly. "I'm sure it will." He looked off at the ship that was to carry him home. But he did not look happy. He looked as if he had gone hollow inside.

On the way back, the Martian stopped at the small house surrounded with flowers. He called inside.

"Why," demanded the slender, pale-faced woman who came to the door, "did you make me come down here just now? Why did you make me wear this horrid chalky face-whitener?"

Her husband spoke with a softness that was like velvet over a sword. "I know about last night, Reeta."

His wife caught her breath.

Her husband turned to the smiling woman who walked out to greet him. "I am sorry, Mohain," he said gently. "We must go home, now. Perhaps you will come up tonight with your husband?"

"Ah, he only takes me out once a week," the woman laughed, "and last night it was to the fireshow. Did you see it?"

"Alas," said the Martian, with a faint tinge of a smile, "unfortunately, we did not."

With a heavy rumble, the Mars-Earth spaceship passed overhead.

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the lotus eaters

by . . . Eldon K. Everett

To be a SF fan was to be lonely, particularly when anyone differing from the norm was quickly suspect.

IT WAS cold in Cincinnati. The icy wind went right through his overcoat as Tom Spencer pushed against it, peering down the street through the gathering darkness. He stopped beneath one of the infrequent street lights and looked back over his shoulder, throwing an aquiline shadow on the dirty brick wall.

Satisfied that he wasn't being followed, he walked across the street, his heels clicking hollowly as they struck against the pavement.

When he came to a light again, he pulled a small black notebook from his pocket and glanced from it to the dingy apartment house and back to the notebook again. Shivering in the wind, he put it back in his pocket and walked up the small flight of stairs to the door.

Once inside, he waited for a moment in the dim hallway, looking out into the street. Seeing nothing, he climbed quietly up the stairs to the second floor, then stopped to listen. The only sound was the voice coming from a radio on the floor above.

". . . since the war, we have all found it necessary to tighten our purse strings, which should make

Eldon K. Everett is well-known in West Coast fan circles, having been active there since the early 1940's. He reports that he has been a bartender, radio announcer, aide to a political campaign manager, and more recently has been employed in the Flight Test Instrumentation Laboratory at Boeing.

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this offer especially attractive to the homemaker. Commodity Control has just released these large, 2-ounce jars of delicious instant coffee from the warehouses at . . ."

He walked down the hall, pausing below the single hanging light bulb to read the note on the door: "Midwestern Science-Fiction Society."

Once inside, he slipped off his overcoat and looked around him. This was the first time they'd held a meeting here. In the dusty little room, about 15 people were sitting on chairs and tables listening to a sharp-voiced little man with a mustache who was standing in front of them holding a discussion with himself.

Spencer knew him, as he did nearly everyone else who was there. It was Clarke, a farmer from the Lake. He nodded to some of the others; Harmon, Cadillac, Wools, Martin, and Cynthia Adams. There were two men in the back row whose faces were unfamiliar. One was tall and lanky, with glasses; the other, husky, balding slightly, with a goatee.

He sat down to listen.

". . . Oh, they haven't started confiscating them yet, but I don't doubt for a minute that they will." Clarke gestured toward the shelves of science-fiction books and magazines. "That'll be next, I suppose. 15 years ago, I can remember that they were publishing 15 or 20 different mags. Today, it's westerns! Westerns! Old Man Palmer up in Wisconsin wanted to start a stf magazine last year. He's *still* waiting around for them to assign him a paper quota!"

He made a face. "They keep making an issue of Orwell's '*1984*,' holding it up and saying 'Look! Be sure that you don't let this happen!' And in the meantime they take Nietsche and others out of the libraries, and lay down the law: Anyone who reads the political writings of the fifties does so in sympathy with those 'Neo-Orwellists' who lean toward the overthrow of the United States' government by force and violence. Nietsche 'stimulates a trend of thought not in accordance with American ideals.' Hooray!"

Spencer poured himself a glass of beer. He smiled and waved at the girl. Clarke went on talking:

". . . What really kills me, though, are these god-awful speeches by the president. Only one channel to watch any more, and every set bugged to make sure you've got it on when the president speaks. Twice-a-month, regular as ration coupons. 'All citizens must be made aware of the responsibilities they possess living in a democratic society.' And then that fat-headed character comes on and tells us how to be good citizens. Hate the Easterners, lynch the Wobblies, and burn the books! At least they don't come around and peek in the window to see if you're really watching or not. I can't stand that greasy-voiced slop. I go down

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in the basement and work when he's on!"

Al Cadillac stood up and addressed the meeting. "I'd like to call the meeting to order by calling Tom Spencer to the stand."

There was a little ripple of perfunctory applause as Spencer walked up to the front of the room. He paused and looked around.

"I'm glad to see a couple of new faces here tonight. I'm afraid I don't know your names, though."

Cadillac interrupted: "Sorry, Tom. That's Clyde Turnbaugh and Henry Jordan from New York. You've read their stuff in the 'zines."

"I sure have. I'd like to add my welcome to you two guys. You're the first ones from the East Coast that I've seen since the demobilization. How'd you get here?"

Turnbaugh, the one with the glasses, stood up. "We were assigned to bring a truckful of derestricted foods in from Buffalo. Took us nearly three weeks on those lousy roads, but we volunteered for this duty in hopes of being able to sit in on a meeting here."

"They'll give a report on their trip later, Tom." It was Cadillac again. "How did it go at the capitol today?"

"Not too good. I spent nearly two hours waiting to see the poobah at Information Classification. That Clarke article in the last issue came in for attack by the shovelful. Somebody up there'd like very much to brand us subversive and shut us up. I'm not sure, but I think that they had somebody tail me this afternoon, hoping I'd go to Wobbly headquarters or something. We must really be a thorn in somebody's tail!

"You should've seen the look on his face when I gave him the copy for next issue. That article on Hubbard is definitely out. Some new change in policy, I guess."

Clarke jumped to his feet. "You see what I mean? First one thing, then Hubbard, next . . ."

"Oh, shut up! Next you'll drag in Shaver!" A voice from the rear. Clarke sat down.

Cadillac asked for questions from the floor. Cynthia Adams had one: "Tom, have you heard anything on the citizen travel permits?"

Spencer frowned. "Whoever is throwing the monkey wrenches into our plans is doing a terrific job. Relocation of a unit our size requires special authorization, and as far as I know, the governor hasn't even gotten around to our applications yet."

Seeing the puzzled looks on the two New Yorkers' faces, Spencer explained. "We're hoping to move out to the West Coast. All of us. They've reopened UCLA, or at any rate, what was left of it after the bombs, and there's supposed to be some fan-activity out there. Anyway, government restrictions on communications aren't so tight."

"Well, I'll be darned!" Jordan pulled at his goatee. "We got a

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letter just before we left New York. It was from Ackerman."

"Ackerman?" Everyone turned to look at him.

"Yep, and you'll never believe this. As soon as he got out of the hospital, he managed to talk his way into a job in Information Classification out there. Writing propaganda films, or something."

"Hot Dawg!" It was Cadillac.

By this time the Easterners were the center of attention, and everyone seemed to be buzzing around them. Spencer made his way across the room to Cynthia Adams.

His eyes roamed over the brunette's soft curves, her smiling face. They were going to have things to talk about once they got to California.

Fourteen months of constant lobbying had paid off. The travel permits had come through, including one for Henry Jordan, who had decided to go west with the others. Turnbaugh had returned to his family in New York.

It was early in the morning and they were milling around in the snow at Clarke's farm. Spencer looked out across the fields. The snow had almost covered the few remaining ruins of what had once been a small town, and in a way, he was thankful for that. It was hard to leave a place where you'd grown up and lived most of your life. A place where friends and relatives had died.

His reverie was broken by Cadillac's voice. "I hope to God that Plymouth holds up!" He was kicking at a rusty fender. There were 2 cars and a pickup truck, all of them made some time before the war. They had built a hood over the back of the pickup with salvaged lumber and canvas, and Harmon & Wools were helping Clarke load the boxes of books and magazines.

"Tom—come over here and help us." It was Cynthia. She and the other women were trying to cram everything from pots and pans to Finlay originals into the automobile trunks. He walked over to give them a hand. He pointed to the mattresses strapped onto the tops of the cars and said, "We're going to look like a caravan of Okies on this trip!"

Finally, they were ready to go. Everyone piled into the ancient wrecks, taking up every bit of available space. Spencer sat in the back seat of the old '55 Ford, his arm around Cynthia Adams, while Clarke and a box full of old Burroughs books took up the room that remained.

They sat there for a few minutes, letting the motor warm up, watching the steam rise from the front of the hood. An introspective silence had settled over the party. Spencer turned and looked down at the girl. There were tears in their eyes. The war had changed a lot; people, places, governments. But it hadn't changed memories. This was still the place where they

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had grown up, gone to school, fallen in love, and fought for what they had felt was right. No place else could ever mean as much to them.

The car pushed forward through the snow, the other vehicles falling in place behind. He held her just a little bit closer as they pulled out of the yard. Nobody looked back. It was too much of a temptation.

Spencer looked across the little hotel lobby. Cynthia was dozing in the summery heat, sitting on a worn davenport. If everything worked out, they'd reach Los Angeles in 3 more days. If everything worked out. He looked down at the battered typewriter.

The sun was shining through the screen door, and outside he could hear Clarke's raucous voice as he played a four-way game of catch with some of the others. The smell of pines was in the air, wafted across the lake by a gentle breeze. Ohio seemed a million miles away, something remembered from childhood.

A fly was crawling across the girl's face, and without opening her eyes, she brushed it away. One thing after another, he thought. There were times when they'd all regretted starting out on this trip. He remembered lots of times *he'd* regretted it.

There had been the time when the soldiers had stopped them at a condemned bridge. The cars could go across *only* if one man drove them and the others walked across afterwards. They'd said thumbs down on the truck. It weighed too much.

It had taken them nearly a whole day to unload the truck and carry the boxes across by hand, one at a time. What a crazy bunch of people we are, he thought. But nobody'd even suggested leaving the magazines behind.

He pulled himself back to the present. The Wools' mimeograph was sitting there by the window, waiting for him to finish typing the stencil. Clarke had insisted that they print a fanzine to distribute to the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society as soon as they got there, and Spencer had been elected to write the editorial.

A loud thump on the front porch brought him up sharply. That made three times that Clarke had pitched that baseball up onto the porch. He seemed determined to put out a window. Al Cadillac ran up onto the porch, scooped up the ball, and tossed it back with a loud holler.

Spencer began to type:

I have been a science-fiction fan for a long, long time; since before the war, since I was a kid. It's been a part of my life, a big part. Somehow, everything I've done has been enriched by my love of science-fiction and the friendships that I've formed because of it. That's why it's so difficult to answer specific questions, like "Why?"

Well, I and my friends have just

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come hundreds of miles, giving up our homes and our jobs, to come here to California. It would be very difficult to explain this to anyone else, but I'm sure that you, the members of the LASFS, will understand why we made the trip.

There's more to being a fan than just reading the stuff. We can't really be happy unless we can get together with others who share the same enthusiasm that we do. Back before the war, we used to think that science-fiction, in some strange way, was going to make a better world. We thought that the conquest of space would open new horizons for Mankind.

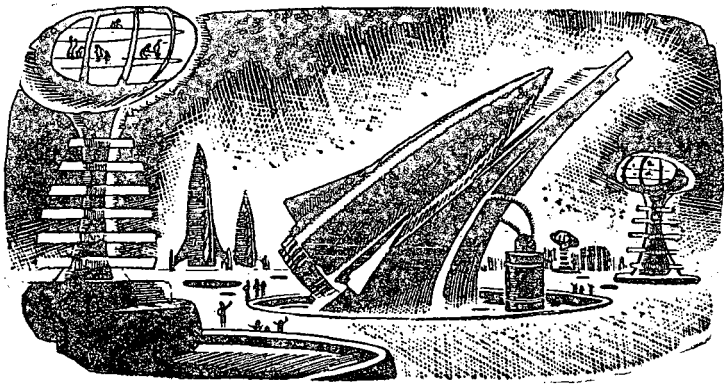
When space-travel did come, and Mr. Average Man went ahead watching baseball games and drinking beer instead of going out to explore the other worlds, we were disappointed; but I think we'd known all along that that was the way that it was going to be.

After the war was over, a lot of things were different; a lot of people had been killed, and those that were left were afraid to think, afraid of what Science could do.

This attitude is growing. Maybe, by banding together, we can do our part to preserve that freedom that is so much a part of our lives; not merely the freedom of thought, but the right to reach out once again for the stars, the right to dream.

Spencer removed the stencil from the typewriter and held it up to the sunlight for a moment, checking the impression. Then, satisfied, he walked over to the mimeograph and slipped the stencil onto the drum.

Thump! The baseball hit the porch again, and he smiled as he heard Cadillac come running after it, swearing at Clarke. Then he reached down and began to turn the crank.



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shapes in the sky

by . . . Civilian Saucer Intelligence

CSI turns its attention to "The Curious Incident of the Cat in the Night-Time," and other exotica of Ufology . . .

IN 1953 the *New Yorker* printed a cartoon that became a byword. It showed a pair of newly-landed saucer pilots imperiously telling a phlegmatic horse, somewhere in the Western mountains: "Take us to your President!" Actually, when you come to think about it, one might seriously question — well, *semi*-seriously — whether some of our extraterrestrial guests really aren't a bit confused about who's in charge here.

Certain mistakes would be understandable. To readers of science fiction it will be no new suggestion that a visiting extraterrestrial biologist might easily jump to the conclusion that on this planet the dominant species is the automobile, to whose well-being and numerical increase a slave race of hypnotized and devoted bipeds is perpetually ministering. Naturally at first he would identify the winged sort as the males, and the more numerous earthbound types as sexless workers, after the pattern of the social insects such as bees and termites. (The queens must be inside those big buildings in Detroit, laying eggs).

Perhaps, indeed, this error is actually being made. The UFO that

The Research Section of Civilian Saucer Intelligence of New York now considers a neglected aspect of Ufology—the animals, generally dogs, often the first to see the strange shapes in the sky. . . . CSI of New York publishes a newsletter on sightings and holds occasional public meetings.

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flies alongside an airliner, or lands on the road in front of a truck and stops its engine, is not necessarily curious about our mechanical achievements; conceivably, the occupants are making earnest attempts to "contact" the strangely unresponsive oil-eating entities of Sol III. These "entities" habitually carry living creatures about in their stomachs; but to the saucerians this may seem no more than a complex evolutionary adaptation, much like the wood-digesting micro-organisms that termites carry about in *their* stomachs.

But could some of our visitors possibly be under the impression that *dogs* are top dog on this planet? Admittedly, we simian bipeds do support a large population of canine quadrupeds, most of which do nothing—so far as an observer in a saucer could tell—for us in return. But surely (we protest), even the dullest of space visitors must be able to see that *Homo* is more *sapiens* than his Fido?

All the same, it is odd what an interest in dogs the "spacemen" seemed to develop last November, immediately after little moon-dog Laika had begun to spin about our globe in her windowless kennel on November 2nd. Saucer editor Norbert Gariety of Florida gave expression to an idea that had occurred to many: "Maybe the UFO folks took a good look at Sputnik II, decided we were using dogs for pilots, and suddenly became interested in getting hold of some dogs to see if they were really more intelligent than the two-legged variety of animals. Only being facetious — but who knows?" (S.P.A.C.E., Jan. 1958).

Here are the two extraordinary reports that inspired that speculation—with the advance warning that neither one has been investigated extensively enough to justify either acceptance or rejection.

On the morning of November 6, 1957, in a suburb of Knoxville, Tennessee, a 12-year-old schoolboy named Everett Clark told his parents a startling tale. When he went out at 6:50 a.m. to let his dog Frisky into the house, he saw that Frisky and several other dogs were across the road, near a "long, round" object. Two men and two women were standing near this thing, talking "like German soldiers in war movies." As Everett approached, one of the men tried to grab Frisky, who growled and backed away. The man then picked up a small brown dog, but put him down hurriedly when the dog started to bite him. At the boy's approach, all four quickly entered the craft—apparently without using any door—"like they were walking through glass," he said—and it took off vertically with no noise. Newspaper reporters that afternoon accompanied Everett to the spot and were staggered to find an elliptical imprint, about five feet wide and 24 feet long, in the meadow grass. Everett said this mark was the right shape, but that the craft had been considerably

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longer than 24 feet. (Knoxville *News-Sentinel,* Nov. 6.)

The second case is alleged to have happened at dusk the same day, November 6, when John Trasco of Everittstown, New Jersey, left the house to feed his Belgian police dog, King. Mrs. Trasco, in the kitchen, heard King barking furiously, and looked out to see a luminous egg-shaped object, only about 10 feet long, oscillating in the air near the barn. Meanwhile Trasco found himself face to face with a gnome-like little man less than three feet tall with a putty-colored face and frog-like eyes, dressed in a green suit and matching beret, with shiny buttons. He spoke in broken English, declaring—according to Mr. Trasco —"We are peaceful people. We don't want no trouble. We just want your dog." (King was frothing at the mouth with terror and excitement.) The startled man replied in a yell, "Get the hell out of here!" At this rebuff the gnome re-entered his saucer—apparently without using any door—and it flew up into the sky with a slight throbbing sound. (Milford, N.J., *Delaware Valley News,* Nov. 15.) Talking to Richard Harpster, an experienced journalist and UFO investigator of Washington, N.J., Mrs. Trasco commented, "I told John, we should have let them take King. He's half-blind and so cross I don't know who else would ever want him."

Generally speaking, Fido views the UFO and its occupants with great disfavor—as well he may if the spacemen are so prone to dog-nap. In the Kelly, Kentucky, landing case of August 21, 1955, the dog gave the alarm by barking violently as the first of the "little men" approached, but then put his tail between his legs and ran under the house, not to reappear until the next day. In the "Flatwoods Monster" incident of September 1952, the dog was bolder, and nearly paid for it with his life, for he was gassed by the noxious vapor near the ground (F.U., Jan. 1958). But we have heard only one report of an actual canine fatality after a UFO sighting. This pathetic event is said to have occurred October 21, 1954, when a silvery object was seen hovering over a rubber factory at Pozzuoli, near Naples. Several workers and a Pekingese dog were watching the UFO when it suddenly rose vertically with a piercing whistle. "The dog barked and fell to the ground, dead." (*Paris-Presse,* Oct. 23, 1954.)

In another celebrated case it was said that a dog had been struck and killed by a rain of unknown metallic fragments ejected by a doughnut-shaped UFO overhead. This was the Maury Island (Washington) incident, alleged to have happened on June 21, 1947. But we need not shed many tears over the strange fate of this unlucky canine, since it seems reasonably certain that the whole thing was fictitious. (See Ruppelt, *Report on Unidentified Flying Objects,* pp. 41-45. The July-Aug., 1958 issue of *Flying Saucers,*

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published by Ray Palmer—the publisher referred to by Ruppelt—reprints a detailed account of the affair by Kenneth Arnold, who investigated it. In the same issue Palmer belatedly mentions that one of the two men who originated the story had a previous record of purveying fantastic tales.)

It's surprising how many UFO cases a dog has had a paw in. He is often the first to sound the alarm. This was true in many of the 1954 French landing cases described in Michel's *Flying Saucers and the Straight-Line Mystery*. As a matter of fact, the distinction of being the first European to report "little men" (on September 10, 1954), belongs not to Marius Dewilde of Quarouble but to his dog Kiki, whose frantic barking and howling brought Dewilde out of his cottage. At Chabeuil on September 26, where Mme. Leboeuf was gathering mushrooms in the woods, it was her dog Dolly whose barking and howling attracted her attention to a "scarecrow" which to her horror proved to be no scarecrow, but a creature in a translucent "diving suit"—"like a boy done up in a cellophane bag." By the time the saucer rose into the sky a few minutes later, all the dogs in the village were howling.

(We have heard it suggested that the reason dogs "bay the moon" is that they mistake it for a flying saucer.)

In another of the French landing cases in the fall of 1954, the apprehension seems to have been on the other side. A retired customs official at Perpignan reported that he saw a large red sphere land and a tall man "dressed in a diver's suit" step out, but change his mind and jump back into his craft when he saw the observer's two dogs. (*APRO Bulletin*, Nov. 15, 1954.) More like the Everett Clark type were the two normal-looking "spacemen" who on October 3 reportedly patted the dog of M. Garreau, of Chaleix, before re-entering their "flying soupdish." (*Echo-Soir*, Oran, Oct. 15.)

But UFOs do not have to land for dogs to notice them; recall the Steigs' sighting of October 21, 1955 (F.U., March 1957). At Pistakee Bay on Lake Michigan, one evening in May 1954, Ralph O. Munson, a Chicago architect, was fly-casting when he heard a whistle like a shell approaching, which sank to a sustained drone. Then he saw the lake and grass agitated by a pulsating draft from above, and his dog barked and cowered at his side. Hovering overhead was an unlighted object that "resembled a streetcar," which remained for a couple of minutes; then the drone rose in pitch again, and the object took off like a bullet. Others had heard the siren-like sounds, and it became known that most of the TV sets in the neighborhood had been unaccountably blurred during the period when Munson and his dog saw the UFO. (Chicago *American*, Jan. 31, 1955.)

More recently—at 2:30 a.m. on

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August 14, 1957—newspaperman Dick Engler of Forest Hills (New York City) started to take his boxer dog Esther out for her customary bedtime walk. "But as soon as they got outside, the dog stopped, growled, and refused to go any further." Engler took her back indoors and returned to the street, where he was astonished to see a luminous object that was executing angular maneuvers with pauses to hover, and producing a humming sound. Three ambulance drivers at nearby Kings County Hospital later reported that they too had seen this humming object, at 2:37 a.m. (New York *News,* Aug. 20 and 29, 1957.)

Another boxer, name unknown, immortalized himself by his part in perhaps the most sensational and best-witnessed of all saucer-landing incidents—if it really happened. At 10:30 p.m. on October 28, 1954, a young man bicycling home from the movies near Monza, Italy (northeast of Milan) noticed a luminous object in the local sports field. Within a short time a mob of townspeople had broken down the gate of the field, and all saw a disk whose cupola shone with a silvery light "so strong as to annoy the eyes," and two little figures in transparent helmets, whose faces were dark with long noses, "like little elephants." The panicky villagers threw stones and fruit—the stones "seemed to rebound before reaching the disk." Then Giacomo Stefanoni tried to sic his boxer dog on the strangers. But "instead of throwing himself at the Martians, the frightened dog bit his master in the jacket. While Stefanoni sought to free himself from his dog, the strangers succeeded in regaining their craft, and a few moments later, with a sound like a shrill boat whistle, it rose vertically from the ground." According to the newspapers of nearby Florence, more than a hundred persons swore to having seen the affair, and several days later many still had red eyes as after-effects of the blinding light. (Letter from Mrs. James Hogg, III, of Florence, in Evansville, Indiana, *Press,* November 5, 1954.)

Exceedingly strange behavior on the part of an American dog is reported by a witness whose experience, integrity, steady nerves, and powers of observation put the story beyond question. Notice that she did not actually see any object; but it is hard to imagine what else than a UFO it could have been. On the night of May 23, 1954, she was sitting up reading as she kept sick watch over her young daughter, ill with a virus infecton. Her husband was working and would not be home until 2 a.m., but her dog—a friendly, innocuous cocker spaniel—was in the room with her.

It was between 11:30 p.m. and midnight when she heard a lot of static from the radio playing in the kitchen, and went out to tune in on another station. The interference was all over the dial. She then became aware of an odd thrumming noise outside the house (she said later that it could best be duplicated

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by strumming slowly and irregularly on the lowest note on a string bass), and looked out the window to see that the back yard was lit up as if it were midday; shadows of the shrubbery were at the noon position. In the darkened room where her daughter slept, the light was coming through the thin drapes. She looked out of various windows in search of the source of the light, but saw nothing and decided that the source of the light must be above the house.

All the while, ever since the radio static had begun, the spaniel was behaving strangely. With her ruff bristling, constantly growling low, ears flattened and teeth bared, she followed her mistress on the tour of the house. Now she decided to go outdoors and investigate. But as she went toward the door the dog ran ahead of her, turned with its back to the door, facing her mistress, and snarled.

She was perfectly sure that the dog would not let her out of the house; and it struck her that if the dog was afraid of whatever was out there, perhaps it was time for her to be frightened too. She sat down in her chair again, not knowing quite what to do. Then a few minutes later the radio began to play normally again, the noise outdoors stopped, and when she went to look out the window, the lawn was dark. The dog lay down again as usual, quietly.

The witness is qualified to say that neither the noise nor the light could have come from an airplane. (*APRO Bulletin,* July 1954, and personal interview.)

With the possible exception of the saucer pilots themselves, dogs are the most frequent non-human participants in UFO incidents. But it should not be supposed that the rest of the animal kingdom can be counted among the skeptics. *Cattle,* for instance, have been stampeded by low-hovering saucers on several occasions. One dramatic case in which the humming disc emitted an acrid odor (Belle Glade, Florida, Sept. 14, 1952) was described in our January article; this saucer left evidence of its presence, in the form of a 33% reduction in milk production that morning. Two more such reports come from the great European wave of 1954. "On October 12 and 13, 1954, people in at least 15 sections of the Po River valley reported UFOs. About 50 miles from Milan, farmer Antonio Grepaldi said his cows stampeded, injuring his 9-year-old daughter, when a cigar-shaped object emitting blue-silver sparks descended to within a few yards of his house." (*APRO Bulletin,* Nov. 15, 1954.) And just before dawn on Oct. 11, a huge red-luminous object passed over Beauquay, in Normandy, so low that it seemed to "scrape the treetops," terrifying the cows—as well as three farmers who had gone out to milk them. One of the cows, in spite of the attentions of all three dairymen, refused absolutely to give

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any milk until the next morning. (Michel, *op. cit.*)

A recently-published sighting from the November, 1957 wave in the United States is unique: not only a dog, but also some *pigs* testified to the presence of the UFO. At about 2:30 a.m. on Nov. 14, Miss Rosemary Karcz, living on the outskirts of Pulaski, Wisconsin, was awakened by her dog "Skipper" nuzzling her and whining. She went to the window, "Skipper impeding her progress with his fearful actions," and was terror-stricken to see an immense top-shaped object hovering in the sky not more than half a mile away. Tilted toward her so that its underside was not visible, it appeared about 200 feet in diameter. It showed three horizontal slots which emitted a red-orange light; from the central one, a dazzling blue-white gleam was being swept across the countryside. "I've never seen such a light," said Miss Karcz—"it was blinding!" Everything was lit up as bright as day, and the metal roof of a barn, wet with a drizzling rain that was falling, "sparkled like a diamond." She could hear the neighbor's pigs "carrying on something awful — squealing and rushing about in their shelter like mad," and Skipper was shaking with terror. After a few minutes the saucer slipped upward silently and within a couple of seconds had disappeared into the low rain clouds. No other witnesses could be found. (Bernard Chartier in *Flying Saucers,* July-Aug. 1958.)

Even *rabbits* have entered the saucer picture—only once, but in a way strangely reminiscent of the stories of Everett Clark and John Trasco, who cannot possibly have heard of Americo Lorenzini of Isolo (near Spezia) in northern Italy. Lorenzini, a farmer, declared on Nov. 14, 1954—whether in jest or not, we cannot say—that a cigar-shaped craft had landed near his rabbit hutches. Little men in metallic helmets emerged, and seemed to take an interest in the rabbits. Lorenzini went for his shotgun, but when he returned with it he found himself so paralyzed—by fright, as he supposed—that he was unable even to shoot at the robbers, and the gun became too heavy to hold. Meanwhile the little men went into the hutches and carried off all his rabbits. (*APRO Bulletin,* Nov. 15, 1954.)

In a number of cases it was alarm among *poultry* that first attracted the attention of their less observant human keepers. "The frightened cries of a chicken" brought Pedro Morais, of Venancio Aires, Brazil, outdoors on Dec. 11, 1954, to undergo the incredible experience described by Olavo Fontes in the August issue of this magazine. Similarly at Gaillac, France, on Oct. 27, 1952, it was the commotion among her chickens that first induced Mme. Daurces to look to the sky, where one of the most extraordinary "angel-hair" performances ever seen was unfolding. (Michel, *The Truth About Flying Saucers,* p. 146.) In our own

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country, it is recorded on excellent authority that some pigeons became saucer observers in the earliest days of the UFO era. On July 4, 1947, Patrolman Kenneth McDowell of Portland, Oregon was feeding the pigeons back of the precinct house when "I noticed that they became quite excited over something." He looked up, and saw five large disc-shaped objects of a nondescript color, which flew over at great speed, "dipping up and down in an oscillating motion." Two other groups of policemen in the city independently reported this formation of typical fluttering discs. (Sidney Shalett in *Sat. Eve. Post,* April 30, 1949.)

There is one animal conspicuous by its absence from this menagerie of UFO observers—the cat. Just recently we were pleased to encounter, at long last, a saucer case involving a cat — a case which, with recollections of Conan Doyle, might be entitled "The Curious Incident of the Cat in the Night-Time." A lady in California was much excited when she perceived, apparently not far away, a brilliant luminous object that manœuvered back and forth in the sky for several minutes before dashing off. But what struck her as the strangest thing of all was the behavior of her Tommy—a sagacious fellow who always took an intelligent interest in everything going on about him—*"he paid no attention whatsoever to the saucer."*

UFOs OVER SWEDEN?

AN UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT—a meteor according to a Stockholm astronomer—startled people all over Scandinavia on Sunday evening, July 20th, 1958, according to press reports which have just reached us.

"A ball of fire, resembling a rocket, with a blunt front and a pointed end," to quote the later Swedish Ministry of Defense statement, was seen hurtling through the skies at one point, from east to west, "the object being clearly visible and a hissing sound being heard."

Elsewhere in Sweden the object was described as shining with "a strong blue-white light"; as a round, sharply glowing globe, with a long multi-colored tail; and, this in Finland, as a cigar-shaped object, one end glowing brightly.

Two observers referred to an apparent division of the object—"at the horizon it seemed to divide itself"—and it is interesting to note that minutes later, that same night, two brightly glowing objects were seen over Norway.

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universe in books

by . . . Hans Stefan Santesson

Comments on the new books —on novels and other works, and on other matters which may possibly interest you.

THE following comment has been made on the CSI column that appears in this issue . . .

Hark, hark, the dogs do bark!
The saucers are coming to town.
Some go bare, and some
have hair,
And eyes that are shiny and
round . . .

"Weakness is fear! Fear is evil!"

A strange "thing," possibly a robot and possibly also a personification of strange impulses, comes out of the skies, and, for a while, sets the world of Marty Petrucelli ablaze.

James Blish's novel VOR (Avon, 35 cents) describes a possible first "alien" to come to us from outer space, his mission—reconnaissance, his purpose—to test our defences.

A curiously disappointing novel, in contrast to the breath and the vision—and the dignity—of his A CASE OF CONSCIENCE (Ballantine Books, 35 cents), this is hard-hitting conflict-of-personalities stuff, the conflict and the motivation for it possible given *any* set of circumstances. An alien "thing" is the catalyst, however, and we, each and

A further report on some books of interest to science fiction and fantasy readers, novels—and other books—touching both on familiar topics and on the less familiar, and each reflecting in a way the many-sided aspects of life and speculative thought in these times of transition as we near Space.

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every one of us, will no doubt react to it all in our individual way . . .

A Purdue sociologist has "studied" 300 science-fiction stories of the last quarter-century "from Buck Rogers to date" (!!!), and has found that scientists are more and more often the villains of the plot, and less and less frequently the heroes. It seems they surpass businessmen and politicians in their unsavoriness, and all three groups far surpass the outright criminals—in science fiction, the report hastens to add.

It seems the solution to the plot is no longer the automatic factory or the robot, "as they were in 46% of the cases back in 1926" (*the more innocent days, obviously!*); now this solution is used only 26% of the time, since the problem is usually in the realm of the social sciences. The author now relies on aliens from outer space for help.

It seems *six million people* "devour" science fiction (circulation managers of a number of magazines I can think of will please note this interesting statement) and get much of their advanced scientific information in this way. Apparently an earlier Purdue study showed, incidentally, that most high-school students think scientists have a screw loose . . .

Hm . . .

INDUSTRIAL NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT. A CHALLENGE TO THE STATES (National Association of Manufacturers, $2.00) is the Proceedings of a Conference held this Spring, in New York, sponsored by the Nuclear Energy Committee of the National Association of Manufacturers. The Conference resulted from the feeling that there had been critics of the speed of development and capability for protection against radiation hazards since 1954 when private industry and the state governments were first able to accept responsibilities in the new field of nuclear energy. Speakers at the sessions included the Honorable Carl T. Durham, Chairman, Joint Committee on Atomic Energy; Dr. S. Allan Lough, Director, Health and Safety Laboratory, United States Atomic Energy Commission; Harold L. Price, Director, Division of Licensing and Regulation, United States Atomic Energy Commission; Vice Admiral G. F. Hussey, Jr. (Ret), Managing Director, American Standards Association; George W. Griffin, Jr., Vice President, Sylvania Electric Products, Inc.; and Dr. Lauchlin M. Currie, Vice President, Union Carbide Nuclear Company. Readers interested in this aspect of the nuclear field will find these proceedings most interesting.

What, actually, *is* a "Flying Saucer"?

A figment of the imagination?

Animate or inanimate?

Manned or unmanned?

Controlled by alien intelligences, satisfyingly nordic and blonde in appearance? Or by other intelli-

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gences, possibly also alien but far from extra-terrestrial, as Ivan T. Sanderson suggested in his article MAN-MADE UFO in the September *Fantastic Universe?*

We obviously have no way of, as yet, knowing. We can only theorize, and come to some sort of provisional conclusion on the basis of collated reports—with the exception of those lucky few of us who have been to Mars or to Venus, by Flying Saucer or by other means, and who continue to be in frequent contact with these metaphysically minded "space people."

Aimé Michel, French mathematician and engineer, who incidentally takes a decidedly dim view of these contactee claims, describes the numerous sightings in western Europe in the fall of 1954 in his FLYING SAUCERS AND THE STRAIGHT - LINE MYSTERY (Criterion, $4.50), sightings which, when investigated, appeared to add up to evidence of a carefully organized and intelligent plan.

Michel has come to the definite conclusion that these occasionally motionless disks—equally often far from motionless—are products of "an incredibly advanced technology" that "have maneuvered in the skies and on the ground of western Europe in pursuit of some plan whose purpose, origin and motivation are at present entirely beyond our conjecture."

As at Levelland and elsewhere in this country, "the witnesses frequently associated with the above-described objects," Michel points out, "a certain number of phenomena which, like the objects, were always the same: the stopping of automobile engines; extinguishing of headlights; 'electrification' and paralysis of the human body; heating of objects, to the point where damp materials were desiccated and organic substances such as wood and grass were charred; violent agitation and magnetization of ferrous-metal objects." (page 214).

Apart from his repeated references to "the little men" or beings associated with these sightings*, those who have followed Ivan T. Sanderson's articles in this magazine will be particularly interested in the possibility, raised by Michel himself, (page 99) "that what we refer to as 'flying saucers' are in reality an even more heterogenous assemblage than they already seem to be; that they comprise several phenomena of radically different origins, only the predominant one obeying orthoteny" (the behavior-pattern prompting Michel's coming to certain definite conclusions.) He however parts company with Sanderson at this point, rather than accepting the possibility of there being many different forms, feeling their adherence to this behavior-pattern (which I do not propose to go into at this time) could "help us to determine which of these phenomena are really flying saucers."

There is an important and excel-

*See John Nicholson's article, LITTLE GREEN MEN, in the May, 1958, *F. U.*

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lent appendix on the latest American sightings, by Alexander D. Mebane, of Civilian Saucer Intelligence of New York (the book was translated from the French and edited by the Research Division of CSI).

General L. M. Chassin, General Air Defence Coordinator, Allied Air Forces, Central Europe (NATO), asks, in his Foreword to Michel's book (page 7):

"What intelligence is it that guides these objects? And what methods does it use? To these major questions we can give no answer at present; we must be satisfied with hypotheses."

"Human intelligence? Perhaps. Have recent events not shown us that enormous scientific progress can be made in record time and in absolute secrecy? A disturbing idea for the West, whose limitations we know. But a very improbable explanation, because the 'objects' seem to utilize forms of energy that mankind, of any nation whatever, is still far from mastering."

"Nonhuman intelligence? Why not? It is a long time since Ptolemy placed the earth in the center of a solar system that was itself the universe. Today Eddington could not affirm that our race is undoubtedly supreme and that human intelligence rules the universe. We have become more modest, and willingly admit that possibly there may exist —perhaps not even very far away from us—beings whose civilization has far outstripped our own. Let us deny nothing *a priori*. Let us maintain an attitude of caution; work, and reserve judgment."

By all means read Michel's book.

It is admittedly difficult to point out where precise, physically sensed and *graspable* (if I may coin a word) "reality" ends, and where that other plane begins, that other level of "contra-reality" which Fantasy hints is the refuge from which a number of "things" have sallied forth from time to time (somewhat in the way of Damon Knight's little men in his BE MY GUEST in the September *Fantastic Universe*), sallied forth to make our lives miserable or pleasant and to, over the centuries, contribute their bit to the folklore and to the mythos of the times.

If we assume that science fiction is not arbitrarily limited to extrapolations in dedicated gadgetry, and Fantasy, in turn, is not limited to the exploration of that fascinating half-world peopled both by "the little folk" and by those who serve the dweller in the deep, Cthulhu, we may, I would say, consider the literature on some of the "supernormal happenings" (to quote Sigmund Freud) which have been a disturbing part of our times since long before those trials in Salem described so vividly by Arthur Miller in THE CRUCIBLE.

A "phantom hammer" shatters cups and wine-glasses with a sharp "ping"; ancient Roman lamps appear from nowheres; mysterious scents—sometimes the sweet fra-

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grance of violets, sometimes the pungent smell of wild animals—hangs in the air; an elaborate Oriental necklace drops, as if by magic, around the neck of a woman . . . These things do happen, and they are blamed on poltergeists, mischievous spirits.

Justly so?

Ah! This is the crux of the problem that Dr. Nandor Fodor explores, in his extremely interesting ON THE TRAIL OF THE POLTERGEIST (Citadel, $3.95), as he discusses the background of the famous Thornton Heath Poltergeist, *a cause célèbre* in psychical research in 1938. The International Institute for Psychical Research, of which Dr. Fodor was then the Director of Research, would have considered the tremendous effort that went into the investigation well spent if Dr. Fodor had not attempted to approach the problems that presented themselves on a semi-psychoanalytical basis, making a psychological study of the medium and investigating her previous history.

His right to interpret the results was questioned, and his conclusion that the disturbances sprang from a basic trauma that had produced disassociation was called disgraceful. His resignation was requested.

The result, twenty years later, is this extremely interesting case study, recommended to those of you who agree that we have yet to know ourselves as fully as we could . . .

While I have frequently announced science fiction fan conferences, I have hesitated to discuss in this column matters of interest only to science fiction fandom. An exception to this would seem to be the current feeling in some circles of SF fandom that the incorporation of the World Science Fiction Society, sponsors of the annual conventions, was — well, an error. *Without in any way taking sides in this controversy,* I reprint from *Ground Zero No. 1,* a local fanzine* edited by Belle C. Dietz and others, by permission of both publisher and author, a brief article on the subject by Sam Moskowitz, author of THE IMMORTAL STORM and Chairman of the 1939 World Science Fiction Convention. To quote Mr. Moskowitz:

Statements have come to my attention recently which directly or through inference question the wisdom of continuing an *incorporated* World Science Fiction Convention Society. I personally played a negligible part in setting up the corporation but it had my moral support all the way and still does.

To understand why I support it, it is necessary to have been involved, to some extent, with the economics of putting on major science fiction conventions. The cost of putting on the First World Science Fiction Convention, held in New York City

*—a fanzine is usually a mimeographed publication, circulation varying from one hundred to five hundred copies, circulated solely among SF fans.

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July 2, 3, 4, 1939, came to only a little over $300. The possible loss due to acts of God, poor judgment or general mishandling was small and nothing that a single individual with a passable salary could not subsidize.

Swing closer to date to the convention held in New York City in 1956 and the total cost of the convention comes to over $7,000. An error in judgment put that convention in the hole well over $1,000. Passing the hat reduced the amount somewhat, but had it not been for the existence of an incorporated Society, members of the committee would have been sued, judgments placed on their property and garnishees on their salary for at least $600. Their reward, for a year of painstaking effort, would have been serious financial loss.

Here is what actually happened. Since the World Science Fiction Society was a corporation, the Hotel Biltmore was unable to hold any individual connected with the committee responsible. They could not sue the corporation for more than was in the corporate treasury. So instead of the $3800 they had billed the Society for, they settled for $3200. This was not unfair to the Hotel, since they were attempting to collect for the amount of the guarantee at the banquet and they never actually prepared or served all of the meals involved. (*The guarantee for the Banquet was optimistic.*—EDITOR.)

Had there been no corporation, *financially* responsible members of the committee would have been sued by the Hotel and forced to pay the total amount. In this case, it would have involved interested fans like myself, because we were indiscreet enough to permit our names to be listed on the committee.

Any individual making a regular salary, having any savings or owning any property who permits his name to be listed on the committee of a major science fiction convention that is presented by an unincorporated body is a fool. He is pledging more than his name and his time, he is also risking his good hard cash. This may scarcely worry those who work irregularly and have no financial or tangible assets worthy of the name, but it is a potent and very real threat to those of us who do. Nor is the matter much of a worry when the total expenditure is only a few hundred dollars, but when it involves thousands, it is something that could actually strike financial ruin at a well-intentioned party.

It is not common knowledge, but *legally,* every fan who buys a membership in a world convention for one or two dollars is technically liable for debts incurred by the committee of that convention, if the sponsoring organization is not incorporated!

Say, for example, a future convention should lose $2,000 which is *far* from impossible. A fan in Cleveland or San Francisco who thought he was being a good Joe

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by buying a membership in a convention could find himself entangled with a hotel or printer to make up a loss that was not of his making. Under the present incorporated setup, only the corporation may be sued and no individual is responsible. Had this not been so, in the case of the Hotel Biltmore in New York City, regular convention goers Sam Moskowitz, Forrest J. Ackerman, Robert Bloch, Bob Tucker and Dr. C. L. Barrett, might quite legally have found themselves in the unhappy situation of individually or collectively making up the loss.

The sponsors of the convention are the ones in greatest danger and it is quite within the realm of probability for a member of the sponsoring committee of six to find that the other five people are either minors or have no tangible assets and he loses his car or even mortgages his house to make up a convention loss.

A convention corporation also provides checks and balances against dishonesty. It is very easy for a convention member to get a court order opening the corporation's books, even if the top brass doesn't want him to see them. But when a convention is run by a separate group, no one gets to see the figures unless the committee so wills it.

If a convention, like the one in New York, can cost $7,000 dollars, there is room in a future convention for embezzlement of thousands of dollars from convention funds, *if those who put on the show are responsible only to themselves.*

The very many years in which world science fiction conventions always showed a profit have lulled fans into a false sense of security. Things have changed. Both the New York and London conventions lost money. Future conventions might find themselves in the same plight. The time has passed when most fans are minors and not responsible for debts incurred. The time has passed when, at the worst, a convention loss would amount to a few hundred dollars. Would those fans who do not like the idea of a corporation be willing to sign a note accepting responsibility for losses of any future convention, making it possible to drop the corporation, which is the only protection the rest of us have against mishandling?

If fans don't like the way the corporation is being handled, that is another matter entirely. The complete records are available for examination and if serious irregularities are found, there are provisions to replace those handling corporate matters. But to use personalities or the fear of abuse of powers as an excuse to dissolve The World Science Fiction Society Corporation makes no sense!

A number of questions must be answered, in some cases quite soon, in this Space Age that we are now entering.

One of these is the origin and

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the nature of those shapes in the sky, those unidentified flying objects, seen by all too many people throughout these last years and and throughout history to be *all* dismissed as natural phenomena and hallucinations. We live in times when it takes hours and not days to cross this country, and when we are capable of sending up a satellite that is circling the Earth once every 112 minutes. It is sheer escapism, under these conditions, to ignore the possibility that while some of these so-called UFOs *may* have decidedly terrestrial origins (as suggested by Ivan T. Sanderson in the September *Fantastic Universe*) some *may* come from some of those planets where major astronomers today concede there may be intelligent life, not necessarily humanoid or golden haired. . . .

We face extremely serious problems in this Space Age that we are entering—problems discussed by Lester del Rey in his series of articles in this magazine. And we are confronted, right now, by problems such as those described in Del Rey's novel NERVES (Ballantine Books), problems arising out of the harnessing of atomic energy for peaceful purposes—not in the year 2008, but today in 1958!

Some of these problems are discussed elsewhere (see page 115), and also in Norman Lansdell's extremely interesting THE ATOM AND THE ENERGY REVOLUTION (Penguin Books, 65 cents), a study of the practical implications of atomic energy in the world of today and of tomorrow.

The author, working in management consultancy since the mid-thirties, is particularly interested in the impact of industry and commerce on people and social living; the present work is a study of methods of energy production which will obviously have momentous effects on the whole of human life and society. The balance of world trade and the relation of industry to the state may be changed in the light of the development of atomic power, while the universal radiation hazards which accompany it may, conceivably, bring about some surrender of national sovereignty.

Topics discussed include the sources of natural materials for atomic energy development, its exploitation in various ways by different countries and by international bodies, and the impact of atomic energy on the world as a whole. Recommended.

The tragic death, as we went to press, of a Teaneck, New Jersey, youngster, when a home-made rocket-propelled toy automobile blew up, is grim confirmation of the need for adult supervision of many, if not all, teenage experiments in this field. This emphatically does not mean supervision to the point where a damper is put on the boy's initiative, but it does mean supervision—and *guidance*—so that tragedies like this can be avoided.

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The successive launching of a series of satellites, and the increased emphasis on rocketry and missiles in our own and other nations' thinking, is obviously stimulating. And there isn't the slightest doubt that tomorrow's Wernher von Brauns will come from the ranks of the youngsters today making home-made rockets in dozens of amateur groups throughout the country.

BUT—let's face it—at the age of fifteen — seventeen — or even later—*however talented you may be*—you do *not* know all the answers! A few years of high school chemistry is not sufficient background to tamper with elements that—as happened with this much younger boy—can blow up in your face!

An article in the New York *Daily News* for March 2, 1958, advised amateur rocketeers, in their own interest, to get in touch, if they lived in the New York metropolitan area, with Captain Bertrand R. Brindley, Public Information Officer, 1st Army, Governor's Island, New York 4. If you do not live in these parts, I would personally suggest you write to the American Rocket Society, 500 Fifth Avenue, New York 36. There are people working in this field all over the country—the ARS knows where they are. Explain what you are doing and ask them to let you know who you can contact in your area for advice.

I am very serious about this. Not only can your future career depend on such an early contact. Your life can also be saved!

There is no doubt a sane and sober explanation (one hopes) for the increased popularity of the horror movies and of the monsters from inner space, the great-great-great grand-nephews of the indestructible Baron Franckenstein and all the others currently featured on the neighborhood screens.

Producers and exhibitors (including the producers of one "mystery" movie where your life was insured in case you'd die of fright during the show) insist, happily, that one word explains it all—ESCAPISM.

Where is it ending? Don't ask me—but be careful, as you cross the park tonight. . . .

I normally do not comment on books not published in this country, but I think many of you would find Winifred Duncan's THE FIELDS OF FORCE (1956, Theosophical Publishing House, London) extremely interesting. Described as an excursion into Hindu Metaphysics as applied to Biology, Dr. Duncan, author of THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE PROTOZOA and WEBS IN THE WIND, THE HABITS OF WEB-WEAVING SPIDERS, explores a number of, as she herself describes them, "delightful, encouraging, imaginative and still unprovable hypotheses."

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(1) "That life, crystal, plant and animal, did not begin on this tiny earth and does not end here."

(2) "That the various phyla of animals and plants did not spring from one isolated ancestor but from many and are still doing so."

(3) "That the future of evolution is not limited to genetic inheritance, but has been, from its appearance on this earth and long before that, a double process, genetic and psychic."

(4) "That high specialization is not a sign of coming extinction but of progress toward another state of being."

All this, as Dr. Duncan cheerfully admits, is "of course, biological heresy," but it makes for interesting reading.

Look for the book in your library, or contact your nearest Theosophical Society.

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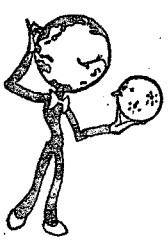

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the green bottle

by . . . Elizabeth Shafer

It couldn't have been more than eight inches long—eight inches of grimacing ancient frightening evil.

ANNE and Robert Parks had come down to the southern coast to spend the summer. It was the first vacation they had had in four years of marriage, and they had decided to take a tiny, isolated cottage on the beach five miles from the somewhat primitive village of Aguilando. They drove into town for supplies and perhaps a year-old movie at the village's only theater each week. The rest of the time they spent in blissful solitude, wandering along the endless stretch of sandy beach below the cottage, swimming, sunning themselves contentedly on the cottage's miniature veranda.

They had never known such peacefulness. Anne gathered shells and pebbles from the beach on their daily walks, and Robert collected bits of seaweed or driftwood washed up along the sand by the tide.

One afternoon as they returned from a long, lazy stroll, Anne carrying a paper sack of shells and pebbles, Robert with a piece of driftwood in his hand, they came upon a strange, sea-washed bottle of deep glass-green lying just at the edge of the water.

Free-lance writer Elizabeth Shafer, who lives in Colorado Springs, sold her first story while a freshman in College and can't remember ever wanting to be anything but a writer. PS:—*Since then she has sold to* Woman's Day, Christian Science Monitor, Modern Romances, Mechanics Illustrated, *etc., etc.*

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"Oh, look!" Anne cried and ran forward to pick it up.

"Is there a note in it?" Robert joked. He joined her at the edge of the sea.

"No," Anne said. "Nothing but a bit of scum. But how heavy it is!" She handed the bottle to Robert.

"Say, it is, isn't it?" Robert dropped his piece of driftwood and took the bottle in both hands. "You're right. Nothing inside. Except that scum on the bottom." He shook the bottle, but the scum neither rattled nor moved.

"Look." Anne pointed to the design about a third of the way down the wide neck of the bottle. The bottle's mouth was sealed with some strange metal, and the lower edges of the seal, which extended some length down the bottle, formed the upper border for a sort of feize which ran around the bottle at the width of about an inch. The whole bottle could not have been longer than eight inches, and its slightly pot-bellied shape was not unpleasing.

Robert fingered the pattern, but he could not make out the figures . . . they seemed to be a wild array of semi-human figures with here and there the outline of a beast.

"Pretty, isn't it?" he said. "Let's add it to our collection."

They carried it up the beach with them to the cottage. Robert set it on the low wicker table on the veranda, and they went inside to prepare supper.

The cottage consisted of three rooms—a sittingroom, a bedroom whose windows opened onto the veranda, and a kitchen. Tired from their long walk, Anne and Robert prepared a simple meal, ate it quickly, and went to bed early. They soon drifted off to sleep, lulled by the warm night air.

Some time after midnight, Robert was aroused by Anne clutching his arm.

"Listen!"

"What?" he murmured sleepily. Then he, too, was listening to the sound . . . a low, moaning sound like the hollow, delicate call one hears when he places a sea shell to his ear. But there was another quality to this sound. It rose and fell, now loud, now almost inaudible. Robert found himself sitting on the edge of the bed, his feet automatically slipped into sandals. Quickly, Anne joined him. The sound, if it was a sound, ceased.

Robert listened for a long, unthinking moment, alert as a dog is alert, without thought, listening with every fiber of his body. It came again, clearer this time, louder, more piercing. It came from the veranda.

"What is it?" Anne whispered.

"I don't know," Robert said, and he found that he, too, was whispering. "But I'm going to find out." He put on his robe.

Anne caught up her robe and followed him. They crept to the door and looked out, waiting for their eyes to become accustomed to

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the dark. It was a moonlit night, and a pattern of light fell upon the low wicker table. There was no one in sight.

Robert moved forward cautiously, Anne keeping close behind him. They walked the length of the veranda and back. There was nothing, no one.

"We must have been dreaming," Robert said. He laughed a little shakily. "Well, as long as we're up, let's have a cigarette." He reached for the pack which lay on the table beside the green glass bottle. He drew his hand away as if it had been lashed by a whip.

There was something moving in the bottle.

He laughed silently at his nerves. There had been nothing in the bottle when they had brought it home . . . there could be nothing in it now. It was tightly sealed. Furthermore, what fool could imagine anything to be afraid of inside an eight-inch bottle? Idly he reached out and picked up the bottle, looked at it more closely in the moonlight flooding across the porch. He nearly dropped the bottle, and then his grasp became a paralyzed thing and he could not have let go if the bottle had seared him with sudden flame.

"Robert! What is it?"

Then Anne, too, saw what he had seen.

Inside the pot-bellied, eight-inch, green bottle was a man. No, it was not really a man . . . it was a man-like creature, a tiny, scaly, hideous man-like creature which was grimacing horribly and tearing at the smooth inner surface of the glass with taloned hands. There was a fury to his efforts—a persistent, angry fury—which made one feel that it had been in force for a long, long time. They could hear the faint tapping and slithering of horny claws tearing futilely at the glass.

With the carefulness of a somnambulist, Robert Parks placed the bottle in the exact center of the table and stepped back. He and Anne looked at each other. Wordlessly, they turned and went quickly into the house.

"I'll make us some coffee," Anne said. She opened the cupboard with shaking hands.

They sat in silence through the night, drinking coffee, avoiding each other's eyes and the terribleness of speech. As morning light seeped slowly into the room, Robert stood up shakily.

"I'm going to take another look at that bottle," he announced, his voice harsh.

Silently Anne took his hand and they walked out onto the porch. Slowly, slowly, they walked forward to where the bottle stood in the early morning sunlight. Crouching down, Robert studied the bottle intently without touching it.

There was nothing in the bottle —nothing but the crescent-shaped bit of scum which still clung to the bottom of the vessel. Encouraged, Robert picked up the bottle and

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shook it. The scum-like shape did not move. He set the bottle down once more and turned to Anne, laughed weakly.

"We must have had a twin nightmare or something last night," he said.

Anne did not laugh. "Robert," she said, her voice tense with urgency, "Robert, let's get out of here!"

"Leave here, you mean? Just because of a green glass bottle? Why, honey, don't be silly. This is the nicest place we ever saw. You said so yourself."

"That was before last night."

"We must have been having hallucinations or something. We walked too far and got too tired in the hot sun." He stopped lamely. "Now, Anne! What we need is some breakfast—and sleep."

Anne shuddered. "I don't think I can ever sleep again."

But she followed him into the kitchen. When they had eaten a hearty breakfast and the sun was high in the morning sky, they both felt better.

"Tell you what," Robert said. "Let's pack a lunch and go up to the other end of the beach, spend the day."

"Yes, oh, yes!" Anne agreed quickly.

They left by the back way, walking swiftly, almost as if someone or some thing were after them. They spent the entire day on the beach, sleeping fitfully, sunning themselves, retiring to the shadow of some rocks in the heat of the afternoon. Late in the afternoon they started back.

The sun was setting when they reached the cottage. Everything was just the same: the cottage, the empty beach, the narrow road leading to the village five miles away. At the steps leading up to the veranda, Anne hesitated, but Robert passed her and went up to the wicker table purposefully. He picked up the bottle, held it to the light, shook it.

"Nothing, see? I guess we were suffering from a touch of the sun." He laughed.

"Just the same," Anne said, "I don't think I could ever go to sleep in this house again."

Robert's eyes met hers in sudden understanding. "In that case," he suggested, trying to keep his tone as light as before, "let's sit out here tonight and watch."

Anne opened her mouth to protest, then said nothing.

They busied themselves in the kitchen, lingering long after supper was over and the dishes put away. At about ten-thirty they went out to the veranda and sat down on the wicker love-seat beside the table where the green bottle stood. Anne slipped her hand into Robert's and they sat wordlessly, staring at the bottle. For perhaps two hours they sat silent, unmoving, unsleeping, heavy-lidded with constant vigilance. The bottle sat quietly upon the table.

Then the sea breeze swept across the veranda, and they raised their faces to it. In the next instant, a

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low, far-away sigh sounded from the table beside them. They looked down at the bottle and saw the bit of scum in the greenness of the bottle's interior rise painfully, wearily to its feet and shake itself.

It was not a man—yet like a man. Its face was savage but infinitely tired. Its lean, misshapen body was covered with scales. Its long, crooked fingers grew to curving, horny claws. And these claws now began to feel the unending smoothness of the glass bottle with a gesture filled with terrible familiarity and hopeless hope.

The claws slithered against the glass, the figure traveled around the inside of the bottle, groping, groping. Gradually the groping became a frenzy, and the claws tapped at the glass, scratched at it furiously.

Robert Parks found himself tearing frantically at the heavy seal over the mouth of the bottle, tearing at it until the blood started from his finger tips. But the seal remained unbroken. And, as he tried unthinkingly to free the Thing within the bottle, his eyes met the eyes of this strange creature. It stared up at him madly, savagely. Never before had Robert Parks looked into Evil. Never had he felt the pure horror which now drowned his body and his mind of all feeling, all action, all thought. Beside him, he heard her breathing.

With an effort, he tore his eyes away from the gaze of that awful Thing within the bottle. Averting his face, he marched carefully, deliberately down the steps to the moonlit sand. Down to the sea he marched, a dim, unthought purpose in his mind moving him on, leaving him unconscious of the shadows playing across the sand, of the wind coming in from the sea. When his sandaled feet felt the sea caressing them, he stopped. He looked out across the immeasurable expanse of sea and sky before him, took one last look at the mad, evil face of the gesticulating little figure within the green bottle, and threw it far out into the ocean.

He turned and went back the slope to the cottage. Anne lay sobbing on the floor of the veranda. He picked her up and carried her to the car at the side of the house. Without looking back, he started the car and drove it onto the narrow road leading to Aguilando. Hands gripping the steering-wheel, he pressed the accelerator to the floor . . .

Three minutes later, he pulled up at a filling-station on the outskirts of Aguilando.

"Gas," he told the attendant briefly. "A full tank."

The attendant stared at them curiously. "You folks look all done in," he said kindly. "Wouldn't you like something to drink while you're waiting?" He turned and reached into the cooler beside the pumps.

"Wouldn't you like a bottle of pop?"

Anne's eyes went blank and she began to scream.

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